

The Principles of Sanctification

set apart in Christ as fellow-workers with God

Volume II

Zack Rosiere



June, MMXVII

Principles of Sanctification: set apart in Christ as fellow-workers with God

Copyright © 2017 by Insight of the King Publications

Published by Insight of the King Publications

Front cover artist- "Kokitom/Shutterstock.com"

Front and back cover background-"Midiwaves/Shutterstock.com"

Front and back cover and interior vector designs- "Romanova Ekaterina/Shutterstock.com"

Christian Martyrs illustration by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1863

Blandina illustration by Charles Joseph Mettais, 1866

Printed and bound by DiggyPOD

First printing June, 2017

Printed in the United States of America

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-947266-01-8

Table of Gontents



Introduction
Concerning the two functions of Sanctification
Concerning the Soul
Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God21
The Truth of Jesus is the True Knowledge of Him24
Love is the key to Sanctification31
Enlightened to Knowledge and Wisdom32
Ambassadors of the Kingdom of God49
Make Jesus Your Treasure
Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling
Pursue Jesus69
Lay aside the old self72
Consider yourself dead to sin, and alive to God75
Let us Run the Race that is Set Before Us78
Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead82
Concerning Christian Persecution
Suffering tribulation and persecution for the Word's sake92
Enduring sickness, disease, and calamity96
Temptations, consequences for sin, and spiritual warfare99
Discipline and training from God108
Joyfully enduring persecution for the Name of Jesus120
The Plundering of Your Property123
A Tribute to Christian Martyrs132
James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John (died 44AD)133
Peter and Paul (died 67AD)133
Ignatius (died 108AD)134

Polycarp (died 167AD)136
Sanctus142
Maturus and Sanctus143
Blandina144
Pothinus146
Romanus 146
Eight Martyrs147
Apphianus148
Agapius 151
Theodosia152
Pamphilus and others with him153
John of Egypt159
Origen (184 - 253AD)
Origen's life and account of the martyrdom of his pupils 164
Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley (died 1555)
James Pavanne (died 1525)171
In Conclusion173
A Guideline to Sanctification
Step 1- Connect yourself to the Vine 176
Step 2- Put on the new self177
Step 3- Walk by the Spirit and humble yourself to God183
Step 4- Walk in Love, regard others as more important than yourself
Step 5- Derive the benefit of the Spirit187
Step 6- Bear the fruit of the Spirit to build and equip others in the body of Christ
Step 7- The Sanctification of the Soul191
Conclusion195



od, in His master plan of man's redemption, established sanctification; a way for man to be separated from the wickedness and corruption of sin. He established this principle before the foundation of the world and foreshadowed the objective of sanctification through His Law and Prophets, but the fruition would not be established until His Son, Jesus, defeated sin and gave us Himself as our refuge. Jesus rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and translated us into His kingdom, the kingdom of Light, (Col 1:3, IPet 2:9). The course of sanctification could not be complete until Jesus made a place to be separated to. Not only did He rescue us from the darkness, He also established a new place for us to abide. To be translated and rescued out of darkness without having a new place to reside, nonetheless, would have resulted in bondage. No, Jesus not only rescued us, He also prepared the safest, most secure place for us to abide; in Him. Our new home is in Him. It is in Him we are secure. It is in Him we have our refuge. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day, He took back the authority of death and hell, (Rev 1:18). This means, now when people die, if they believe in Jesus as their Savior, they are not bound by the chains of death, but they will immediately be with Him in heaven, (2Cor 5:8). But heaven is still a temporary residence for us. Heaven is not our permanent home, but a transitory dwelling for Christians. In the end, heaven and earth will be remade, (Rev 21:1, 2Pet 3:10-13), and the Father will come down to this remade earth and live among us, (Rev 21:3-4). But Jesus not only went to the cross for this to take place. There is something much more precious for those who are faithful. He made Himself as our dwelling place. He not only went to prepare a physical place for us to dwell eternally, He prepared Himself as our eternal dwelling. We are His body, forever to have our abode in Him.

Introduction

He has not built a mansion in heaven that we will call our new home. He has prepared Himself as our abode. He is our fortress and we abide in Him and He in us. "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2).

Jesus went to the cross to prepare Himself as our Iwelling place

Now that Jesus has conquered death through the cross, and established our new abode in Him, we can be successfully sanctified, separated from sin, and translated into a safe and secure place, forever to reside in Him.

The process of the sanctification of the soul is the walk of the Christian by the Spirit in this physical world. Our sanctification will be complete in Him when we are glorified together with Him, but the process starts now, in this wicked world, when we commit our life to Jesus.

Jacques Lefevre, (1455-1536), a sixteenth century reformer from France, was debating with some leaders of the papal authority when they asked, "was there ever a single man justified without works?" Lefevre responded, "A single man; innumerable men. How many among people of bad lives have ardently desired the grace of baptism, having only faith in Christ, and have, if they died immediately after, entered the mansions of the blessed without works!" ... "But some will say, if we are not justified by works, it is in vain for us to do them." The doctor of Paris, (Lefevre), replied, "Certainly not, it is not in vain. If I hold a mirror turned toward the sun, it receives the sun's image. The more it is polished and cleaned, the more brilliant the image is, but if it is soiled, the brilliancy is lost. It is the same with justification in those who lead an impure life."¹

¹ D'Aubigné, J. H. M. (1862). *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*. (H. Beveridge & H. White, Trans.) (Vol. 3, pp. 270–271). Glasgow; London: William Collins; R. Groombridge & Sons.

In using this metaphor of the mirror, Lefevre was describing the difference between the justification of the spirit, and the sanctification of the soul. While Jesus was on the earth, He represented the image of the Father. The glory of God radiated through our Savior to the extent that Jesus even said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." In the same way, Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16). We, Christians, are to be that light, radiating the glory of God for all to see. God's image should be pronounced through our behavior. It is our choices and decisions which separate us from the world, "and the sin which so easily entangles us. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1). Let not sin tarnish your mirror. Let it not hinder or distort the magnificent glory of God to shine on the world. It is the process of the sanctification of the soul in which the metaphorical mirror is polished and reflects the light and glory of God to shine brightly for all to see.

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Romans 6:22

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us"

~J.R.R Tolkien



Introduction

Concerning the two functions of Sanctification



he word sanctification, ἀγιάζω, hagiazo, is to set apart and remove from common use, to make holy and dedicate. There are two functions of sanctification: the sanctification of the spirit, and the sanctification of the soul. Both are performed

by the same means; through the grace of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, and both have the same purpose, to separate sin from our lives.

- Sanctification of the spirit, also referred to as the justification of the spirit, is only accomplished by the grace of God thru the blood of Jesus and His work on the cross. (IPet 1:1-2, ICor 1:30, ICor 6:11, 1:2, Acts 26:18, Heb 10:10, 29, 13:12).
- 2) Sanctification of the soul is a result of our choices, working with the Holy Spirit through co-operating grace. Only a born-again believer can sanctify his soul as a result of the efficacious work of grace by the Holy Spirit. (IPet 3:15, ITim 4:5, 2Tim 2:21, Gal 5:16, IThes 4:3-7. 2Thes 2:13). Normally, I don't like the term, "co-operating grace", because it is usually used in conjunction with justification; but in the case of sanctification, it is an accurate description of our co-operation with grace by the Holy Spirit to renew our soul, which is our mind, will, and emotions, to the things of God.

Sanctification of the spirit

The sanctification of the spirit is the justification of the spirit. The old, dead spirit removed and buried with Christ, and the new, created spirit, perfect and complete, is put in place, and covered by the blood of Jesus. This process is discussed in great depth in my first volume, The

Concerning the two functions of Sanctification

Principles of Justification. Justification of the spirit is the result of one decision, to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The outcome of this decision results in the separation or complete removal of the old, dead spirit. The sanctification of the spirit is the separation of sin from the spirit. I mention this terminology up front to clarify these descriptions. For simplicity, I will be referring to sanctification as the sanctification of the soul. I will refer to the sanctification of the spirit as "justification", so as not to confuse the two. I mention this because we see these two terms used in the bible. If one does not read the Word of God with the understanding of the differences between the justification of the spirit and the sanctification of the soul, it will confuse the reader, and sadly lead to bad doctrine. Below are two examples of the use of the term sanctification when referring to the justification of the spirit.

I Corinthians I:30- But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and <u>righteousness</u> and <u>sanctification</u>, and <u>redemption</u>.

¹ Peter 1:1-3-¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, ... who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the <u>sanctifying work of</u> <u>the Spirit</u>, to obey Jesus Christ and <u>be sprinkled with His</u> <u>blood</u>: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has <u>caused us to be born again</u> to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

In the two verses above, we see the word $\dot{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\dot{o}\varsigma$, hagiasmon, sanctification, used to define the justification of the spirit, and not specifically referring to the sanctification of the soul. We know these two verses are focused on the sanctification of the spirit, namely justification, because this sanctification is resulting in righteousness by the blood of Jesus and redemption. The sanctification of the soul is a result of justification, it does not obtain justification. Sanctification of sin from our soul. Justification of the spirit is a result of the spirit is a result of the one and only decision to accept

Concerning the two functions of Sanctification

Jesus as your Savior. Sanctification of the soul is a result of yielding yourself to the work of the Holy Spirit on a daily continual basis. It is a life-long process, made up of millions of decisions, resulting in the separation of sin from your soul.

<•>>.<>>

Sanctification of the soul

In this second volume, The Principles of Sanctification, we will be focused on the second function of sanctification, the sanctification of the soul. This is where we learn how to live in this corrupted world, ruled by sin; and not only live, but bring light to the darkness. The sanctification of the soul is the process of separating our mind, will, and emotions from the sin of this world by the efficacious works of the Holy Spirit in us, (Rom 6:19-22). When we were made righteous by the work of Jesus on the cross, our old, dead spirit was cut off and a new, created spirit was put in place, (2Cor 5:17). Our soul, however, is not made new. When we are born-again, we are released from the bondage of sin and given the ability to choose Jesus. This freedom in Christ, to choose Him, is what we call evangelical free will. The ability, through the Spirit-illuminated Word of God, to choose Jesus in every step of our life. These choices allow the Holy Spirit to work through us, resulting in the sanctification of the soul. Below are some examples of this sanctification. The sanctification of the soul does not obtain righteousness, but is the fruit of our righteousness, resulting in the separation of sin from our mind, will, and emotions.

2 Timothy 2:21- Therefore, if anyone <u>cleanses himself</u> from these *things*, he will be a <u>vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to</u> <u>the Master</u>, prepared for every good work.

Concerning the two functions of Sanctification

I Thessalonians 4:3-4-³ For this is the will of God, your <u>sanctification</u>; *that is*, that you <u>abstain</u> from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you <u>know how to possess his own</u> <u>vessel</u> in sanctification and honor,

I Peter 3:14–15-¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, ¹⁵ but <u>sanctify Christ as</u> <u>Lord in your hearts</u>, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

I Timothy 4:4-5-4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is <u>received with gratitude</u>; ⁵ for it is <u>sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer</u>.

Galatians 5:16- But I say, <u>walk by the Spirit</u>, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.





~10~



he soul is the mind, will, and emotions of the man. It is the outward expression of the inward man. The soul is the avenue in which a man can express the desires of the heart. "The good man out of the good treasure of his

heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for out of the abundance of his heart, the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45).

Without the soul, the spirit of a man is inactive. However, the soul cannot be its own master. God made each of us to have a driving force within us. A force that controls and shepherds our life. There are two authorities that will control the soul: the sinful nature and the divine nature, the former being the effects and corruption of original sin, the latter being the newly created spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit. Only one can rule the soul at a time "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (the system of the world)." (Matthew 6:24).

God's desire is for us to choose Jesus as our Shepherd, allowing the influence of the Holy Spirit onto the newly created spirit of a man to be the guiding force into all Truth. From the point of the original sin, man's spirit and soul have always been tainted and corrupted with sin. Even from the womb, the nature of the human spirit, the soul, and the body are degenerated as a result of sin. The spirit is dead because of sin, (Eph 2:1); therefore, the sinful nature has control and rules the unregenerate soul. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). This isn't from our personal acts of sin, although that contributes to it, the roots go far deeper. "Therefore, just as through one man, (Adam), sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12). For by the transgression of one, many died, therefore all men, before there is even a chance of committing a sin, have been contaminated with sin because of Adam's original transgression. Therefore, Jesus had to be born from a virgin, born from the perfect seed of the Holy Spirit, without the contaminated seed of man. There had never been a man born without sin in the world until Jesus, and there never will be another. Jesus is the last Adam, not the second, implying there may be a third and fourth and so on. "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (I Corinthians 15:45). Man is born with a dead spirit, corrupted by sin, with the sinful nature in control of his life. "However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual." (I Corinthians 15:46). By accepting the free-gift of grace and believing in Jesus, man is given a new spirit, healthy and alive in Him, covered by the blood of Jesus, never to be corrupted by sin again. Romans 8:10 "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." Romans 5:17 "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

For the first time, man can freely choose to humble himself to the plan of God and be led by Spirit. (see my discussion on the bondage of the will in the first volume for a further explanation, pg. 35-51, 61-81) The soul has the free-will choice to yield to the newly created spirit, but even though the spirit is made alive in Christ, the soul is still unregenerate. The mind, will, and emotions of a man are still infected by the original sin. In order for the soul to prosper, it must humble itself to the spirit and be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (Rom 12:2). This is the process of sanctification; yield yourself to the plan of God and His Spiritilluminated Word, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, separate your mind, will, and emotions from the corruption and bondage of sin. Paul makes this very clear in his writings. We must press on toward the prize of the high calling and make Jesus our treasure. All through the epistles of Paul we see, what I like to call "action words". Words of responsibility in this life to pursue the prize. The first eleven verses of Colossians 3 have seven action words, urging our transformation of the soul, resulting in sanctification.

- I- <u>keep seeking</u> the things above, (Colossians 3:1)
- II- <u>Set your mind</u> on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2).
- III- <u>consider</u> the members of your earthly body as dead, (Colossians 3:5).
- IV- <u>put them all aside</u>: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth." (Colossians 3:8).
- V- <u>laid aside</u> the old self with its evil practices, (Colossians 3:9).
- VI- **<u>put on the new self</u>**, (Colossians 3:10).
- VII- <u>being renewed</u> to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him, (Colossians 3:10).

The spirit is a new creation in Christ Jesus, (2Cor 5:17). Our soul, however, has not been regenerated, and must be renewed to humble itself to the Holy Spirit and express the character of the newly created spirit. There is enmity between the soul and the spirit, (Gen 3:15), a war between the two natures, the sinful nature, and the divine nature, (Rom 7:14-25), and it will not end until the adoption of sons is complete, the redemption of our body. So, while we exist on this earth, we must continue to separate our soul from sin, and show the worth of Jesus and His sacrifice.

The Greek word translated as soul is, $\psi \nu \chi \dot{\eta}$, psyche. It originates from the word $\psi \dot{\nu} \chi \omega$, psycho, meaning cold, to diminish greatly, to be spread out and extinguished. Below are two examples of the root word $\psi \dot{\nu} \chi \omega$, psycho used in the Bible.

Matthew 24:12- Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will, (ψύχω, psycho), **grow cold**.

Jeremiah 8:2 ^{LXX}- They will, ($\psi \dot{\chi} \omega$, psycho), <u>spread them</u> <u>out</u>... as in spreading out embers from a fire, resulting in the fire to be extinguished and diminished.

This word, $\psi \dot{\nu} \chi \omega$, psycho, does not convey a sense of life, but instead is the opposite.] find it very interesting that the word for life, $\psi \upsilon \chi \dot{\eta},$ psyche, originates from a word that means to be void of life, $\psi \dot{\chi} \omega$, psycho. On the surface, this does not seem to make sense. How can these two words be connected to each other? They seem as though they are opposites. But when you understand the corrupting effect of the original sin on the human life, you realize that without Jesus, there really is no life apart from Christ, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins," (Ephesians 2:1). Our dead soul needs the life of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring life back into our soul, (Eph 2:5, Rom 8:10-11). Therefore, the Holy Spírít chose the word $\psi \upsilon \chi \eta$, psyche to describe our souls because the soul of every human is corrupt, and has grown cold and apart from God because of the degrading effect of original sin. When we are born again, our old dead spirit is cut off and we are given a new, perfect spirit, untainted by sin and covered by the blood of Jesus. But our soul is still cold and diminished, infected by the corruption of sin. However, through the Word of God, by the power and fire of the Holy Spirit, the spark of faith can ignite within us, and our soul can be renewed, and align itself with our new, perfected spirit, separated from the sin of the world, radiating the glory of God in our lives. This process is called the sanctification of the soul.

Our soul is our intellect. It is the decision maker and the expression of our spirit. When the soul is co-operating with the Spirit, it brings life and movement to the new creation. As when God created Adam and **breathed the breath of life into him, and he became a living soul**, or another translation says he **became another speaking spirit like God, (Gen 2:7)**. The soul gives us the ability to speak and interact

with others and even God. Our spirit can live without a body, but it can't live without a soul. The soul is the wisdom and understanding of our spirit. But without the fire of the Holy Spirit, the knowledge has grown cold and apart from God because of sin. Our soul, still tainted with sin, can only understand earthly, worldly things. The knowledge, wisdom, understanding of an unregenerate soul only knows the things it can feel, touch and understand of this physical world. It has grown cold because of transgression and must be taught and renewed in the things of God. Our soul controls our mind, will and emotions. It is our decision maker, and because it is tainted with sin, it must be renewed daily and kept in line to make right decisions. Our soul has cooled and needs to be revived by the fire of the Holy Spirit into the knowledge and wisdom of Him.

The soul; the mind, will, and emotions of a born-again man must be renewed to align itself, and its actions, with its new created spirit. A cold soul will still choose the sinful nature. It will choose the ways of this world over the things of God unless it is made alive and made to think in line with the True Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding of Jesus Christ. As the soul is renewed, it is being shaped into the True Knowledge of Jesus. One must be born-again and the Holy Spirit must be actively working and living inside them to transform the soul. The act of sanctifying the soul can only be done thru the Spirit. "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16, ^{NKJV}). Or as the NLT states: "let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves." (Galatians 5:16, ^{NLT}).

The sanctification of the soul is not something we can do on our own. We must yield our soul to the Spirit, and make all our decisions in accordance with His Word. This is walking by the Spirit, leading to the renewal and transformation of the soul, resulting in sanctification.

The soul must be renewed to a new way of thinking. We must seek God's righteousness and His ways, rather than our own. Humble yourself to Him and He will direct your paths, (**Prov 3:6**).

~14~

"For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:2-3).

We must know God's righteousness. This is a key to sanctification. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays, desiring his readers to come to the Knowledge of Christ. "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a <u>spirit of wisdom and of</u> <u>revelation in the knowledge of Him</u>. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be <u>enlightened</u>, so that you will <u>know</u> what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17-19).

This is why Paul was so adamant about gaining the full knowledge and wisdom of God; because as you attain the mind of Christ, you start making decisions the way God would. You are led by the Spirit and not by the things of this world. This separates the soul from sin. In fact, the desire and urge to live in sin will diminish, and you will be completely satisfied in Him, no longer drawn to the desires of the flesh. When Jesus is the hope and treasure of your life, you will have complete satisfaction in Him. He is the Bread of Life and the fountain of Living Water, (Jn 4:14, 6:35). Those who eat and drink of Him are completely satisfied. Hove the metaphors Jesus uses. Imagine yourself on a hot summer day when you have been working outside and you long for a drink of cold refreshing water. The instant your lips touch the cool water, your body is revitalized. There is nothing you want more at that moment than to taste the thirstquenching embrace of water. The water revives and invigorates the body, allowing it to continue in the heat of the sun. Food will also result in the same satisfaction. The story of Jonathan is a perfect example of the stimulating effects of food in our body. ^{I Samuel 14:27} "Jonathan put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened." ^{I Samuel 14:29} "Then Jonathan said, "See now, how

my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey."

This is how our spirit reacts to the Bread of Life and the Living Water of Jesus. The satisfaction are bodies receive from the physical effects of food and water are just mere examples of the complete, eternal satisfaction we can have in Jesus. We can be so satisfied in Jesus, that nothing in this world will even compare to the goodness we have in Him.

Therefore, when we allow the Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding of Jesus to penetrate our soul, the essence of our being begins to change into the image of Jesus. The soul is the decision maker and the intellect of our spirit, thus, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are the essence of the soul. It can either be persuaded by the wisdom of the world, or by the Wisdom of God.

If this essence can be renewed to God's essence, it can change the root of the soul, reflecting Jesus in everything we do.

So, this is just conjecture, but | think it is fun to dream in the things of God; if the name of an unregenerate soul is called cold, what is the name for a renewed soul that is functioning in-sync with the reborn spirit? |s this the new name God promises He will give us in the end? (Is 62:2, Rev 2:17, 3:12). Just as Abram's name was changed to Abraham and Jacob to |srael, will God change our name to reflect His essence? Instead of the name, psyche; cold and spread out or unregenerate, what will our new name be? Will He include His name into ours? Just like Abram's name took on the character of God, so might our soul take on the nature of God through True Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding.

As we continue to live this earthly life, we must continually strive to abide in Jesus. We must make Jesus our treasure and purpose in everything we do. The more we live in Him, the more we gain concept of His plan for us. As you spend time with someone, you learn who they are. What are their likes and dislikes. What pleases them and what disappoints.

And in the case of God Almighty as our Father, and Jesus as our Lord, we must learn the plans they have for us. You can only discover these things through spending time with them. "This book of the law (the Word of God) shall <u>not depart from your mouth</u>, but you shall <u>meditate on it day and night</u>, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and <u>then you will have good</u> <u>success</u>." (Joshua 1:8).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105).

"The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130).

The Spirit-illuminated Word gives us Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding. As we read His Word and bind it to our life, it renews and transforms our thinking to be in line with God. The soul can only be sanctified and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, but we must first make a decision to allow Him in and make a conscious effort to abide by His direction. If we do this, the Holy Spirit will ignite a fire in us. He will bring our souls back to life, take us from being cold and greatly diminished, to someone who is alive and full of the True Knowledge and Wisdom of Jesus.

Matthew 3:11- "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

God sent His Son to pay the price for sin and become the final sacrifice in the reconciliation of God and man. Through Jesus, we are given a new spirit, protected by the blood of Jesus, made clean and perfect for the Holy Spirit to reside in. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God, (Rom 8:16). With the Holy Spirit in us, He speaks to our soul; training and showing us the Truth, enlightening us into His Knowledge and Wisdom. This is the fire, the regenerative act, resulting in the renewal and transformation of our soul. We are transformed from a cold, spread out, lifeless, hard, stony, and

unbelieving heart into a heart of love; tender-hearted, pliable, believing, full of knowledge and wisdom, humbled to do the will of God.

Ezekiel 11:19–20-¹⁹ "And I will give them <u>one heart</u>, and put a <u>new spirit</u> within them. And I will take the <u>heart of stone</u> out of their flesh and give them a <u>heart of flesh</u>, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

This Old Testament promise explains the new birth in conjunction with the sanctification of the soul. He says, "I will put a new Spirit in them", this is our newly created spirit given to us thru the grace of God by faith, (Eph 2:8). This is the first step; you must be born again to allow the Holy Spirit into your life to renew and transform your soul. But pay special attention to the description of the new soul. He says, "I will give them one heart", not, | will give them a new heart. Our soul isn't replaced like our spirit is. Our soul is renewed. And it is not just renewed to each individual, but He says, "I will give them one heart". Our renewed soul is one mind, one True Knowledge, one Wisdom of Him, one with Him, one body, one new man, with access in one Spirit to the Father, (Eph 2:13-18). This is the objective of the sanctification of the soul; to unite ourselves with Him and not the world, separate ourselves from sin, and unify ourselves in Him so we can be fellow-workers with God in building up the body of Christ. He continues by saying, "I will take the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh". The word "take" means to remove or take off. God is promising to remove this cold, stony, hardness that has contaminated our soul, and will bring the fire of the Holy Spirit to renew and regenerate it.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul is describing a born-again Christian, and encouraging them that even though some of the fellow Christians had died, they will be reunited with them in the clouds with Jesus. But Paul goes on to explain how a Christian should be acting while he is alive on the earth as we have hope in Jesus' return. All 22 verses below can be summed up in this one statement,

"Do not guench the Spirit"

~19~

Don't quench this fire that God has given us to renew our soul. Live on fire for Him, and don't do anything that would put the fire out. Use this fire to build up one another in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-24- ² For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we are of *the* day, **let us be sober**, having **put on the** breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. " Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. ¹⁴ We urge you, brethren, **admonish** the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶ <u>Rejoice</u> always; ¹⁷ pray without ceasing; ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹ But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil. ²³ Now

may the God of peace Himself <u>sanctify you entirely</u>; and may your <u>spirit and soul and body be preserved complete</u>, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.



Goncerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

Colossians 1:9-10

⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard of *it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be <u>filled with</u> the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and <u>understanding</u>, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, <u>bearing fruit</u> in every good work and <u>increasing in the knowledge of God</u>;

Our life is full of decisions. Some decisions are thoughtfully organized, but the majority of these decisions happen without us even realizing we are making them. For example: if you were going to buy a house, you would have the opportunity to pray, plan and organize your thoughts, and come to a purposed decision based on careful planning, but those kinds of decisions are probably only 10% at best of our total lifelong decisions. The other 90% of all our other choices usually come automatically, without us having the chance to develop a plan before we make that decision. An example of this would be how you might react to a situation at work, or daily discussions you have with your wife and family, your reaction to someone that is rude while in the grocery store, and countless other decisions we can't even remember by the end of the day. These choices, however insignificant they may seem, will add up in a hurry and start to shape your life.

Our decisions are shaping this life and eternal life to come

The first and most important decision a person can make is to choose Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This is step one to a life of living for Him. This act of choosing Jesus as your Lord and Savior will result in life everlasting with Him forever. There is nothing we can do to add to this

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

righteousness, it is a free-gift, one given by the grace of God to raise us up out of death and bring us into life with Him. We are reconciled into His family by the costly blood of Jesus He spilled when He gave His life for us on the cross. At this moment, our spirit is made new into a perfect, sinless spirit that can never be infected by sin, covered, and washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

The next step is our decision of what to do with this free-gift of righteousness. God has given us this gift so we might be a family with Him. He wants us to enjoy life with Him. He wants us to participate in this awesome plan of redemption, the reconciliation of mankind into His family, and He has chosen us to help Him do this. His plan of building His family and bringing us together into One Body, created in Christ Jesus, has included us being His fellow-workers. God has made us an integral part of His plan, the building of the Church, that cannot be completed unless we choose to participate and bring people to the Lord, (Rom 10:14-15). God chose that we, His family, would participate in His reconciling plan of redemption. He wants us involved, and has set forth a commandment of co-operation in the Great Commission- "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation", (Mk 16:15). This is now our decision. What level are you going to participate in the plan of God? After you believe in Jesus, are you satisfied with going back to your normal, worldly routine, or will you start to get to know Him and the plan He has for you? What are you going to do with this free-gift of righteousness? Will you hide it under a basket so no one sees it? Or will you let your light shine before men so they will see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven? These decisions start to make a dramatic effect on your life on this earth and the life to come. God expects us and wants us to live for Him. This is why He sent His Son to die for us. He wants us to choose Him and participate in His plan together. He wants us to get to know Him, connect ourselves to Him and become one with Him. We can do this starting now, in this life, if we only choose Him. This goes back to the original statement, "life is full of choices." We need to make the decision to start choosing Him in

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

everything we do, whether big or small. This is a life-long process, one that takes dedication and commitment, to grow in Him every day. As we have discussed earlier in the book, this process is called the sanctification of the soul. It is a course of development to separate your soul from sin and regenerate your thinking to line up with the will of God. He wants our soul, our decision maker, to be in accordance with Him and to ultimately build up and edify the body of Christ.

As your soul is going thru the life-long process of sanctification, your heart begins to turn from a cold heart of unbelief to a pliable, tender heart, full of faith and love. The process to sanctify the soul is setting you apart from the world and all its corruption and sin, and aligning you with the goodness of God. Your mind is renewed, your will and emotions are transformed, and your thinking is changed, being renewed to the Truth, the Knowledge, the Wisdom, and the Understanding of God. These automatic decisions being made one hundred times a day without thinking, are now being transformed into choosing God's way instead of the selfish, fleshy, way of the world. The deeper and more saturated we are in Him, the more Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding we gain in our soul. We begin to see the way God thinks, and make decisions that please Him, and build up the body of Christ. The Truth that is building in the soul can then be shared with others so they can experience the same joy in knowing Him.

There is a progression the Holy Spirit leads our soul through as we walk in sanctification. There are three steps in every revelation from God as follows:

- ▶ Truth
 - Revelation always starts with the Truth, proceeding from the Word of God

- ► Knowledge
 - Truth awakens the soul to the knowledge of the Christ and His glorious effects of the cross
- > Wisdom and Understanding
 - Knowledge gives us the background and foundation. Allowing us the ability to effectually work wisdom and understanding to make decisions that affect the future.

These three steps are constantly cycling as our soul is transformed into the image of God. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are <u>being transformed into</u> <u>the same image from glory to glory</u>, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is a constant cycle of revelation and learning, renewing the soul to the things of God and separating us from the sin of this world. And even after our sanctification is complete and we are glorified in Him, He will still be showing us the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus for the ages to come, (Eph 2:7). The revelation of Jesus Christ is manifested to us in Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; giving us the ability to joyously give thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light, (Col 1:11-12).

The Truth of Jesus is the True Knowledge of him

As the Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding is being fabricated into the soul, we start to know and understand the things of God. To speak the Truth, (Eph 4:15), or to lie not against the Truth, (Jam 3:14), or to walk in Truth, (Ps 86:11, 3 Jn 1:4), does not merely mean

<->·<->

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

"not to lie". It does include this, but there is so much more to Truth than just "not lying".

The Truth is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ

Truth is the fact that He was born in the flesh from the seed of the Holy Spirit and lived a sinless life, that He died on the cross for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures, (ICor 15:3-4). This is Truth. Instead of thinking truth as "not lying", try inserting the statement "Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ". This even works with the 9th commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor", now, insert Jesus into this, "you shall not speak falsely to a neighbor that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah". Truth is much more than just not lying, it is confessing Jesus as Lord. When Jesus told the Pharisees, the devil is a liar, He was saying the devil does not stand and trust in the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. Satan knows Jesus is the Christ, but he doesn't stand and trust in the Truth. The Truth is not in him and he will never speak the Truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." ^{I John 2:21-22} "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son."

The Truth spoken and believed in the heart will justify the spirit. And as the Knowledge of Truth is embedded into the soul, it begins to speak

out, build, and edify the Church, which is the body of Christ.

Romans 10:9- that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

If you confess this Truth and believe it in your heart, you will be saved. This is called the justification of the spirit, to be rendered righteous. But salvation of the spirit is just the beginning. Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Revelation 22:13). This literally means He has always been, and everything that has, or will ever exist, whether spiritual or physical, came out of Him, and He will always be, in Him there is no end. He is eternal, eternally from the past and will be eternally in the future.

Therefore, because Jesus is the beginning and the end, and everything comes out of Him, and because He is Truth, (Jn 1:14, 17, 14:6), then we can safely say that Truth began with Him, and it will be complete in Him. This is the completed Truth, full of Knowledge and Wisdom, built together in the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that fills all in all, (Eph 1:23, 4:13). This is the completion or perfection of the body of Christ. When salvation is finally complete and the adoption as sons has transformed our mortal bodies into our final glorified state, the redemption of our bodies, (Rom 8:23), the body of Christ will have attained to the unity of faith, a mature man in the knowledge of the Son of God, (Eph 4:13). The more we can attain to this knowledge in this life, the better we can equip the saints and build up the Church to be steadfast in the knowledge of Him. If we do this, we will not be shaken by every wind of doctrine or deceived by the trickery of the devil, (Eph 4:14, Col 1:9-12). As the True Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding become a part, and transform your soul, your natural thinking will start to transform itself according to the image of God.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ^{Colossians 3:10} and have put on the new self who is <u>being renewed to a true knowledge</u> according to the image of the One who created him. ^{John 3:21} But he who <u>practices the truth</u> comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

God is seeking a people that desire to know Him. This is why He gave us a soul. Our soul is our decision maker and He wants us to freely choose Him, and more than just choose Him, but fellowship and become one with Him. John 4:23- "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; <u>for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers</u>."

He wants us to know the Truth, through the true Wisdom and Knowledge. John 8:32- "and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." There is only one way to fellowship with the Father and come boldly to the throne of Grace to participate in the plan of God. It is thru Truth, John 14:6- Jesus said to him, "<u>I am</u> <u>the way, and the Truth, and the life</u>; no one comes to the Father but through Me".

We must make a decision to invite Truth into our soul. Once this decision is made, the Holy Spirit bears witness of that Truth with our spirit and begins to transform our soul. If you decide to know the Truth and allow the Truth to enter your soul, Jesus will open your heart and mind to the scriptures, and enlighten your understanding of the Truth, Luke 24:45- Then He <u>opened their minds to understand the Scriptures</u>.

John 14:16–17- "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is <u>the</u> <u>Spirit of Truth</u>, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. The Spirit of Truth will guide you in all Truth. He is the key to disclosing all Knowledge and Wisdom to your soul. The Spirit never speaks of Himself, but is always bearing witness of the Truth, Jesus, the Son of God and the Christ. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.¹³ But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the Truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." (John 16:12-15). When the Truth is in us and He is the one leading and controlling our lives, the Spirit will speak to our soul about the Truth. He will transform our soul giving us the Knowledge and Wisdom of Jesus, thus, allowing us to make every decision focused on the Truth. Jesus has equipped us with everything we need to work out His plan on the earth with joy. He has given us the Spirit of Truth and the Word of Truth to regenerate our soul and attain to all steadfastness and patience. To the intent that in the midst of tribulation and persecution in the plan of building up His Church, we will have unending joy, giving thanks to the Father who has allowed us to participate and share in this journey of the redemption of mankind, the reconciliation of His family.

I John 5:6- This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. <u>It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit</u> <u>is the Truth.</u>

John 17:13-26- "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have <u>My joy made full in</u> <u>themselves</u>. ¹⁴ <u>I have given them Your word</u>; ... ¹⁷ <u>Sanctify</u> <u>them in the Truth; Your word is Truth</u>. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for <u>those also who believe in Me through their word</u>; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that <u>they may be one, just as We are</u> <u>one</u>; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me... ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that <u>the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in</u> <u>them</u>."

Jesus has made Truth available to anyone who would ask and accept Him. It is our decision to allow Him into our life. He wants us to be fellowworkers with Him, and He expects hard work and diligence. This is a lifelong battle that literally takes place every time you make a decision. The question that you have to train your soul to ask before every decision is, "will this decision glorify God? Am I showing God that I value Him over everything else. Am I proving to Him that He is more important to me than anything else in the world?" Matthew 6:20-21-²⁰ "But store up for yourselves <u>treasures in heaven</u>, ...²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

1 Timothy 2:3-4- This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to <u>come</u> to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Timothy 2:15- Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling <u>the word of truth</u>.

The best way to show the worth of God and present yourself as a fellow-worker with Him is to give Him the things of great value, namely time and money. These are two great resources that are only useful in this world. They are not things we can take with us, but they are probably the two most important things in the world that people use to improve their life, usually for selfish gain. Money can increase your status in life, give you power and luxury for your flesh. It is also a way to sustain the human body with food and shelter. Time is another earthly commodity that is only valuable on this earth, but is just as equal, if not a greater resource than money, because no matter how wealthy a person is, there is only a limited amount of time on this earth for every human being. What two better resources to use in order to show the worth of Jesus? The human body cannot function on this earth without these two resources. By giving them to God, you are proving and showing your complete trust and faith in Him to sustain your life. You have given Him complete control of your flesh and allowed Him to move in your life. So, the next time you decide to sit down for two hours and watch television, instead, consider what could be done for God if you would invest those two hours into His kingdom. Whether it be giving Him the opportunity to teach you thru His Word or equipping the body of Christ in fellowship with others. Let Him be in control of your life and your resources. Once you let go of these things that seem so precious to you, you will find you are not losing anything at all, but instead are gaining an eternal Knowledge of the Creator of the universe. You are developing a relationship with God Almighty Himself, and the results of this is complete satisfaction in Him, unending joy that can never be quenched, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15:11).

Paul knew the real treasure is Jesus, not the things of this world. Paul was content in giving everything he had, including his time and money to Jesus, his real treasure. He said it best in his letter to the Philippians, "Not that I speak from want, for <u>I have learned to be content</u> in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² <u>I know</u> how to get along with humble means, and I also <u>know</u> how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have <u>learned</u> the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:11–13)."

Love is the key to Sanctification

Truth bears enlightenment, enlightenment leads to knowledge, knowledge bears understanding and insight. These lead to the advancement of Wisdom for the purpose of being fellow-workers with Jesus, and to bring people to a life of unending happiness and everlasting joy with the Father.

Love is the key to sanctification and the increase of Knowledge and Wisdom. We must be motivated by love, for without love we are nothing, and can do nothing, (ICor 13:2-3). Faith works by love, (Gal 5:6), the Law and the Prophets hang on love, (Matt 22:40), and God is love, (IJn 4:8). We are commanded to love God and love each other as ourselves, (Matt 22:37-39). We must regard others as more important than ourselves, (Phil 2:3).

Love builds the body of Christ

Knowledge and Wisdom will not result from selfishness. The only reason for gaining the Knowledge and Wisdom of God is to understand and know Him for the purpose of working together with Him in His plan of redemption for mankind. His plan is love and is unselfish. He who first loved us, sent His Son to die for us that we might have everlasting life with Him, (Jn 3:16, IJn 4:19). If you don't love people, you can't fulfill the plan of God. Therefore, ask God to fill you with His love, (Rom 5:5). Humble yourself to Him and He will direct your path in love, (Prov 3:1-6).

Ephesians 4:32- <u>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted,</u> <u>forgiving each other</u>, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:15–16-¹⁵ but speaking the <u>truth in love</u>, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working

of each individual part, causes <u>the growth of the body for the</u> <u>building up of itself in love</u>.

Philippians 1:9- And this I pray, that your <u>love may abound</u> still more and more <u>in real knowledge and all discernment</u>,

Colossians 2:2- that their hearts may be encouraged, having been <u>knit together in love</u>, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, <u>resulting in a</u> <u>true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself</u>.

≺•>•∕•**>**─

Enlightened to Knowledge and Wisdom

We have defined Truth to be the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. This Truth bears witness with our soul, allowing us to start walking by the Spirit and in love, resulting in sanctification. Let us now speak on the topics of Knowledge and Wisdom.

As our soul is being sanctified, the Truth in love begins to make the soul pliable, tenderhearted, ready to do the Master's work. "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, <u>sanctified</u>, <u>useful to the Master</u>, <u>prepared for</u> <u>every good work.</u>" (2 Timothy 2:21). A tender, humble heart gives the seed of the Word a rich, fertile soil to grow and bear the fruit of the Spirit, increasing in Knowledge and Wisdom.

2 Chronicles 34:27- "Because <u>your heart was tender and you</u> <u>humbled yourself before God</u> when you heard His words ..., and *because* <u>you humbled yourself before Me</u>, ... I truly have heard you," declares the LORD.

2 Peter 1:2–8-² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge of God** and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through <u>the true knowledge of Him</u> who called

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

~33~

us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become <u>partakers of the divine nature</u>, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, <u>applying all diligence</u>, in your <u>faith supply moral excellence</u>, and in your moral excellence, <u>knowledge</u>, ⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your <u>self-control</u>, <u>perseverance</u>, and in your <u>perseverance</u>, <u>godliness</u>, ⁷ and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love</u>. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they <u>render you neither useless nor</u> <u>unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ</u>.

When the Truth of Jesus is established in the heart, the soul is enlightened, making it ready and able for the True Knowledge, replacing the knowledge of the world and its selfish ambitions, and making it ready for the work of the Father. It is through the True Knowledge of Jesus in which we become partakers of the divine nature. The completed state of the divine nature, namely the glorification of the body, and the fullness of knowledge will be attained when the revelation of Jesus is manifested to us, and we are made one with Him as His body in the adoption as sons. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:13).

This is our blessed hope. To be one with Him forever. But even now, we can begin to walk with Him and be in Him, sealed by the Holy Spirit. We are no longer under the bondage of sin, obligated to the sinful nature, if we live and abide in Him. We have escaped the corruption of the sinful nature driven by lust and are now applying our faith to live for Him. We can be partakers of the divine nature because our nature is no longer sinful, but divine because of the Holy Spirit living within us. **"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,"** (Romans 8:16). And our soul is enlightened to the True Knowledge of Christ, **"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."** (Colossians 1:27). The soul gains wisdom and understanding toward the peace we have in Christ. As the True Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

increase in the soul, the mind is renewed to partake in the divine nature in this physical body on the earth.

The divine nature, rooted and grounded in love, takes the place of the sinful nature that is ruled by selfishness and lust. But to walk in this divine nature is a daily exercise of diligence, striving and continually laboring in Him. Peter states in verse 8, "if these qualities are yours and are increasing." This implies a choice. In order to inherit the benefits of the divine nature, we must make a decision to apply our diligence to Him, making every effort to respond to God's promises with faith. "being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He is able also to perform." (Romans 4:21).

The Truth of Jesus shines a light on the soul and awakens it to the knowledge of God. Ephesians 1:18 "I pray that <u>the eyes of your heart</u> <u>may be enlightened</u>, so that you will <u>know</u> what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," Acts 26:18 "to <u>open your eyes so that</u> <u>you may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion</u> <u>of Satan to God</u>." ²Timothy 1:10</sup> "and to bring life and immortality <u>to light through the gospel</u>."

When you gain the knowledge of the plan of God, you realize how great a love the Father has for us. That He would send His Son to die for us in order to be reconciled to Him. As your soul is enlightened to this astounding love, the love of God is established in your soul to perform His work. We are driven to please Him and to be a part of His plan, always looking to Jesus as our hope and forgetting the pleasures of this world because we know we have a better possession and a lasting one with Jesus.

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

Hebrews 10:32-39-32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³ partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. ³⁵ Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. ³⁷ FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. ³⁸ BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Hebrews 6:11-12-¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the <u>same diligence</u> so as to realize the <u>full assurance of hope</u> <u>until the end</u>, ¹² so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience <u>inherit the promises</u>.

Hebrews 6:17–19-¹⁷ In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the <u>heirs of the promise</u> the unchangeableness of <u>His purpose</u>, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, <u>we who have taken refuge</u> would have strong encouragement to <u>take hold of the hope set before us</u>. ¹⁹ <u>This hope we have as</u> <u>an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast</u>.

As enlightenment leads to the knowledge of God's plan and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, this knowledge bears understanding and insight into His kingdom. All these attributes work together in unison, building, and strengthening the soul and uniting a fellowship and a personal relationship with the Father and Jesus. The soul continues to be sanctified, it increases in the knowledge of God. Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding are building and fluently working to bring people into the body of Christ. The soul is continuing to increase in steadfastness and patience, the fruit of the spirit is thriving and plentiful in your life, all working together to lead people to Jesus. The insight your soul is gaining begins to shine brightly, showing the worth of Jesus through you so everyone can see. "the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." (John 1:9).

"You are <u>the light of the world</u>. (because the Light is in you) A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and <u>it gives</u> <u>light to all</u> who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may <u>see your good works</u>, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16).

"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may <u>see the light</u>. The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light." (Luke II:33-34).

Daniel 12:10 "<u>Those who have insight will understand</u>," Daniel 12:3 "and those who <u>have insight will shine brightly</u> like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

As the soul is enlightened with Knowledge and Wisdom, the cold, unregenerate soul, hardened by unbelief and sin, and full of the wisdom and knowledge of this fleshly world, begins to be transformed, renewed to the Knowledge and Wisdom of God. Love and brotherly kindness are operating in the soul, keeping the Truth in the forefront of the mind, the eye of the soul, and not forgetting the precious gift of Christ on the cross, the purification of our sins.

Our soul is a decision maker. It does not have a physical substance. It is the mind, will and emotions of the spirit. These decisions of the soul affect the productivity and fruitfulness of the spirit, and while we are in our physical bodies, the result of the decisions of the soul, affect physical actions in the body. When the spirit is made righteous by the blood of Jesus, all sin is washed away and our spirit is made a new creation. The soul, however, is still infected by sin and must be separated and set apart

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

to be made holy in the image of the newly created spirit. This soul, infected by sin, only knows and understands the wisdom and knowledge of the world, but as our soul is sanctified thru love and the Truth allows our soul to be transformed and renewed to the Knowledge and Wisdom of God, our decision maker begins to change. We begin making decisions that line up with God's plan and will for our life. Our decisions, whether conscious or sub-conscious, are now being made from the True Knowledge and Wisdom that now resides in your soul, and the more Knowledge and Wisdom in your soul, replaces the fleshly instincts of the unregenerate soul, and you begin to co-operate with the will of God and His plan of redemption for man. This is a lifelong process that involves feeding your soul on the Word of Truth and attaining to the Knowledge of Him on a daily, consistent basis, reminding and seeing yourself the way God sees you lest you forget who you are, ^{James I:23-25} "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." ^{2 Peter 1:9} "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."

Living the Christian life is foolish in the eyes of the world. It is living life against the grain, like rowing a boat up stream, against the current, (**ICor I:18-31**). But this is why He has given us Wisdom and Understanding. He has strengthened us with all power according to His glorious might for the attaining of steadfastness and patience, in order that we can joyously give thanks to the Father, (**Col I:9-12**). He has given us these things for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience for this life, so we can be equipped to be His fellow-workers in the plan of redemption, to build up the body of Christ and bring His family together in the unity of Him. We are given gifts for the equipping of the saints, (**Ephesians 4:II-24**), to mend what is broken, (**Matt 4:21**), to be

restored in the spirit of gentleness, (Gal 6:1), to fully train, (Lk 6:40), to complete what is lacking, (IThes 3:10), to build up and prepare the body for Jesus, (Heb 10:5).

In doing this, you will have persecution. There will be people that hate you for being a Christian, but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world! (Jn 16:33, Matt 5:11-12, Lk 12:32). Fight the good fight of faith, (ITim 6:12), and press on toward the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus, (Phil 3:14), because God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth, (ITim 2:4), that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. Anyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life with Him, (Jn 3:16-17).

Truth tells us Jesus is the Christ, Knowledge gives us the experience of this work on the cross, and Wisdom gives us insight into the plan of God to make Secisions for the future

<->.

Goncerning Wisdom

It is the Wisdom of God that established His plan of redemption before the foundations of the world. It is the Wisdom of God that is given to His prophets and teaches to proclaim the infallible Word of Truth.

Luke 11:49- "For this reason also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and *some* they will persecute."

Luke 21:15- "for <u>I will give you utterance and wisdom</u> which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute."

Acts 6:8–10-⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ But some men ..., rose up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were <u>unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with</u> <u>which he was speaking</u>.

The soul is the countenance of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. It is a decision maker that either has these attributes of the world or of God. It is the expression of the spirit, portraying and illustrating the things of the spirit outwardly. Jesus is the express image of the Father, (Heb 1:3, Col 1:15). Jesus is also the Wisdom of God, (ICor 1:24, 30), and the Word of God, (Jn 1:1, 14, IJn 1:1). Jesus is the Way for humans to relate and understand who the Father is, (In 14:7-10). God is so big and so majestic and so magnificent, there is no way for the human soul to comprehend the Father. God desires fellowship with us, but how can man fellowship with someone he doesn't understand or cannot comprehend? This is one of the reasons why Jesus became the express image of the Father, but in human form, so that humans would have a Way to comprehend the depth, length, height, and breadth of the love of the Father, (Eph 3:18-19). Jesus is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among men. This was the manifestation of God's Word and His glory in human form so that the truth and glory of God could be revealed to men.

Origen, (184AD - 253AD), a 3rd century Christian and theologian, had an excellent way of explaining this concept in his book on first principles-

Origen, De Principiis, 1.2.8

to show that the Son of God, who was in the form of God, divesting Himself (of His glory), makes it His object, by this very divesting of Himself, to demonstrate to us the fulness of His deity. For instance, suppose that there were a statue of so enormous a size as to fill the whole world, and which on that account could be seen by no one; and that another statue were formed altogether resembling it in

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

the shape of the limbs, and in the features of the countenance, and in form and material, but without the same immensity of size, so that those who were unable to behold the one of enormous proportions, should, on seeing the latter, acknowledge that they had seen the former, because it preserved all the features of its limbs and countenance, and even the very form and material, so closely, as to be altogether undistinguishable from it; by some such similitude, the Son of God, divesting Himself of His equality with the Father, and showing to us the way to the knowledge of Him, is made the express image of His person: so that we, who were unable to look upon the glory of that marvelous light when placed in the greatness of His Godhead, may, by His being made to us brightness, obtain the means of beholding the divine light by looking upon the brightness.

This comparison, of course, of statues, as belonging to material things, is employed for no other purpose than to show that the Son of God, though placed in the very insignificant form of a human body, in consequence of the resemblance of His works and power to the Father, showed that there was in Him an immense and invisible greatness, inasmuch as He said to His disciples, "He who sees Me, sees the Father also;" and, "I and the Father are one." And to these belong also the similar expression, "The Father is in Me, and I in the Father."²

Jesus is the Way for us to understand and comprehend the Father. Jesus is the expression of God's love for us and without Jesus, there is no way for us to know Him and His love. The Father does everything thru Jesus. Even the creation of the universe was accomplished thru Him, (Col 1:15-20), the Father spoke it, (Gen 1), and Jesus brought it into manifestation, (Gen 2). Every time we see God on the scene in the Old Testament, I believe it was actually Jesus performing the work for the Father: Moses and the burning bush, (Ex 3), the cloud and the pillar of fire that brought the Egyptian army into confusion at the Red Sea, (Ex

² Origen. (1885). De Principiis. In A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, & A. C. Coxe (Eds.), F. Crombie (Trans.), Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second (Vol. 4, p. 249). Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company.

14:20, 24-25), the manna, the Bread of Life, from heaven, (Ex 16, Jn 6:31-40, 1Cor 10:3), the Rock in which Living Water flowed out, (Ex 17, 1Cor 10:4), Jesus with two angels communing with Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen 18), the captain of the army of God talking to Joshua before the battle of Jericho, (Josh 5:13-15); these are just a few examples of Jesus functioning as God's expression with man on the earth. And we, the body, do everything thru Him as well. He is the go between, the mediator, (1Tim 2:5), the advocate between us and the Father, (1Jn 2:1-2), our Hight Priest, (Heb 2:17, Zech 6:13). Without Jesus, we are nothing, and it is through Him we can boldly approach the throne of Grace, (Heb 4:14-16), and speak with the Father, (Jn 16:23-24). Jesus is the connection, the Way between the Father and man.

Not to digress into another theological topic, but | believe these different forms we see Jesus as having in the Old Testament, is one of the characters of His nature He gave up by becoming a man. "Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form," (Philippians 2:7). Jesus became a man, and He still is a man, sitting on the throne of grace. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, <u>the man Christ</u> Jesus." (I Timothy 2:5). He has His glorified body, and is bound to that form. | don't believe He can appear in the form of the burning bush again, or anything other than the appearance of Himself. This merely is a glimpse of what Jesus gave up for us so that we could be called the children of God.

Therefore, we know the soul is the avenue in which the spirit and the body function; it is the outward expression of the spirit. Let us keep this thinking and apply it to God. Everything the Father does is thru Jesus, and all communication between the Father and man is accomplished thru His Son, the expression of the Father. Therefore, let me introduce a new concept. This is purely conjecture, but could be another way to help us understand the things of God. There are some striking similarities

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

between the function of the soul and the role of Jesus. As we have learned from the previous sections in this book, the soul is directed by its master. It is either a slave to the sinful nature or enslaved to the divine nature of God. We know Jesus only speaks and does what He hears the Father tell Him to do, (Jn 5:19, 30, 8:26, 28, 12:49-50, 14:10). Jesus is the Servant to the Father, (Matt 20:28, Is 53), Jesus will always humble Himself to the will of the Father, (Phil 2:5-8, Lk 22:24). Jesus is the expression of God and the Wisdom of God, (Heb 1:3, ICor 1:24, 30). It is through Jesus that the Father established His redemptive plan for mankind before the foundation of the world, (Col 1:16). It is evident the Father and Jesus are One; inseparable, connected and integral to each other. Jesus is our example for Christian life; an illustration of our endurance in this life, looking ahead to the glory which is to come. Therefore, is it possible that Jesus is the model, a foreshadow of how the soul should interact with the newly created spirit? Is Jesus a type of the soul of the Father? Is He an example of the perfect state of the soul, interacting in complete agreement with the spirit? Two separate individuals interacting together as one. | believe the relationship Jesus has with the Father is an example and a type of the bond we must have between our soul and our newly created spirit, led by and inseparable from

the Holy Spirit.

Thus, let me use this example to show the magnificent love of the Father. On the cross, we see the Father forsake Jesus, (Matt 27:46). God had to separate Himself from His Son because of the sin that had been laid on Jesus. This is unimaginable to think, not only what Jesus went thru, being separated from His Father, but how awful was it for the Father to be separated from His Son? And not only His Son, but His express image, His Wisdom, His extension, and mediator to His creation, One who had always been before the foundation of the world. They had never been separated up until that moment, and it wasn't just for an instant, this separation lasted for three days until the Father called Jesus out of hell and raised Him from the dead, (Acts 2:24, Rom 6:4, 8:11). When you understand the bond between Jesus and the Father, you begin to know the incomprehensible love the Father has for His children, (Eph 3:18-19); that He would be willing to separate a literal part of Himself in order to reconcile us with Him. This gives us a glimpse of how much the Father loves us.

It is Wisdom that gives us insight into the plan of God to make decisions for the future. God has given us this Wisdom, through His Spirit, to show us what God has prepared for those who love Him, (ICor 2:9-IO). It is the message of the Truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, first revealed to the Apostle Paul, (Eph 3:8-I2), and has now been revealed to us who love Him. It is this Wisdom, Jesus Christ Himself, that is now changing the desire of our soul, transforming, and renewing our minds to the Wisdom of God, giving us the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16-6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak <u>God's</u> wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹ but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10 But God revealed them through the Spirit; ...¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. ... ¹⁶ But we have the mind of Christ.

It is the work of God, through His Son, which gives us the manifold Wisdom of God; and now this work is being manifested in us so we can show forth the glory of God. Not only to those in the world, but to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. To make known the power and Wisdom of God and declare Jesus as Lord to all creation. The Church is the manifestation of the accomplished plan of the cross and it is through the Church that the Wisdom of God is made evident. It is our responsibility as Christians to show the magnificent worth of Jesus Christ, **(Eph 4:1)**.

Because our spirit has been made new by the grace of God, we now have the capacity and the ability to accept this gift, allowing the Holy Spirit to renew the soul and be strengthened in the power of His might, (Eph 3:16). By making the decision to accept Jesus as Lord of your life, and believing He died on the cross, and was buried, and rose again on the third day for our justification, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in our heart and teaches us who we are in Christ, (Rom 5:5). As we abide in Him and His Word abides us, our soul is renewed to the things of God. We learn the Truth, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. We gain the True Knowledge of His love for us, which motivates and excites our soul to walk in the way of His Spirit; to begin walking in love, bearing the fruit of love, resulting in the sanctification of the soul, (Rom 6:22). As our soul is sanctified, our knowledge of His love for us grows in our hearts and the Wisdom of God transforms our soul. If we are led by the Spirit of God, then we will make our decisions for Him and through Him. It is through this power of the Holy Spirit that fills us with the knowledge of His will and the spiritual Wisdom to walk in a manner to show the worth of Jesus to all creation.

Colossians 1:9-12- For this reason also, since the day we heard of *it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be <u>filled with the knowledge of His will</u> in all <u>spiritual</u> <u>wisdom and understanding</u>, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a <u>manner worthy of the Lord</u>, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and <u>increasing in the</u> <u>knowledge of God</u>; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² <u>giving thanks to the Father</u>, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Colossians 1:28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and <u>teaching every man with all wisdom</u>, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. Colossians 2:2-3 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been <u>knit together in love</u>, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of <u>understanding</u>, *resulting* in a <u>true knowledge of God's</u> <u>mystery</u>, *that is*, Christ *Himself*, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

As the soul is transformed, being renewed to the Knowledge and Wisdom of God, it is now co-operating with the new spirit. Knowledge is gained of the work of Jesus on the cross, including His great love for us and the mystery of His plan of the redemption of man. Wisdom is increased to employ the Knowledge of God in an applicable way to build up and edify the body of Christ. Wisdom has the same attributes as love because God is love and His Son, who is Wisdom, is one with the Father. Wisdom is not selfish, it is not meant for personal gain or selfish ambition. It is love, being pure, and with righteous intents to increase the body of Christ and bring everyone into the knowledge of God.

Solomon was given the wisdom of the world. God gave him insight of the physical properties of the creation; how plants grew, the physiology of animals, and these types of physical attributes. Unfortunately, Solomon used this for selfish ambition and let his flesh have dominion. This ruined his life and the blessings God had endowed on him. Although, I believe the book of Ecclesiastes is a letter of repentance from Solomon for the foolishness he portrayed. If you read this book in this light, you can feel the sincereness of Solomon's heart. "All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus, I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11). We, like Solomon, have been given the gift of the wisdom of God. But our wisdom is a greater wisdom. An understanding concerning spiritual matters, an insight into the kingdom of God and His plan for mankind. But we must learn from Solomon not to squander this wisdom for temporal gain, but to help God as fellow-workers in the plan of redemption.

Ephesians 1:7–9- In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us.

<u>In all wisdom and insight</u>⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.

J^{ames 3:13-18} Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, And the seed whose fruit without hypocrisy. 18 is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James ¹⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Salvation begins with Jesus and it is complete in Jesus, and it is the Truth that carries us thru this process from the beginning to the end. Salvation, $\sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho i\alpha$, soteria, is deliverance, preservation, safety, and wholeness. The common use of this word refers to the justification of the spirit; the free-gift of righteousness that Jesus so graciously bestowed on all those who believe in Him. As we discussed in the first volume, justification is the first of three parts of soteria. Righteousness isn't the end of salvation, it is just the beginning. Jesus has given us this free-gift, not to hide it away and wait for the Master's return, but to invest it into the

Concerning the Truth in the Wisdom and Knowledge of God

lives of others, bringing many more into the Truth of Jesus Christ. Jesus describes this perfectly in the parable of the ten minas, **(Lk 19:12-26)**. The Master, Jesus, gave a free-gift of the same value to each of his servants, this can be compared to the free-gift of righteousness. The Master told them, do business, trade, exert yourself with this gift | have given you until | come back. The Master, Jesus, went away to receive the kingdom for Himself from the Father; "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name," (Philippians 2:9). This is Jesus receiving the kingdom for Himself. When He comes back, He is expecting us to have done something with the free-gift He bestowed on us. Notice in the parable, those that invested the gift, and yield a return, were congratulated, and given rewards based on their faithfulness. This is what Jesus expects from us. He wants us to use this free-gift of righteousness to bring others into His kingdom. When Jesus returns, He is expecting results.

Luke 19:12–26- So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return. ¹³ And he called ten of his servants (the servants represent Christians on the earth), and gave them ten minas (each servant received one mina each, representing the gift of righteousness) and said to them,

'Do <u>business with this until I come back</u>.' ¹⁴ But his citizens (the citizens are the people of the world) hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵ When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these servants, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. ¹⁶ The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' ¹⁷ And he said to him, '<u>Well done, good</u> <u>servant</u>, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' ¹⁹ "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰ Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; ²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' ²² He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ 'Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'

²⁴ Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' ²⁵ And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas *already*.' ²⁶ I tell you that to <u>everyone who has, more shall be given</u>, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

Jesus expects us to produce results for the kingdom. Those who learn the Truth of Jesus Christ, gain Knowledge of that Truth, and apply this to their life through Wisdom and Understanding; building up the body of Christ and participating in the plan of redemption as fellowworkers with the Father, these are they whom the Father rewards.

Thus far, I have tried to explain the process of attaining to the Truth, Knowledge, and Wisdom of Jesus Christ in order to be equipped, and equip others, to be a fellow-worker with Christ, to build up the body of Christ, and to participate in the magnificent plan of God, namely the redemption of mankind and the reconciliation to the Father.

> This process is our responsibility and our free choice. God has given us the right to choose. So, choose to live this earthly life for Him and with Him.



Ambassadors of the Kingdom of God



od wanted a family, and the redemptive plan of God was established for this reason. A person can only become a child of God by accepting the free-gift of grace Jesus bestowed on us through His work on the cross. And the only

way a person can accept this gift is if they hear the Word of God. "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" (Romans 10:14–15).

This is our opportunity to participate in His plan. He needs and wants us to participate in the plan of redemption by being ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, **(2Cor 5:20)**; fellow-workers with God in the redemptive work of Christ, leading as many as we can to the throne room of grace. God has developed His master plan of redemption to include us. As your soul is sanctified, you gain the knowledge of Him and His plans for your life. The mystery and the True Knowledge is revealed to those who seek God. As we love one another and gain knowledge, we perform our work, the will of God, in building the Church, the body of Christ, unified in love.

This is the whole purpose of sanctifying your soul; to live apart from the sin of this world and live in the Truth of Jesus Christ, building up the body of Christ.

God wants His family, and He wants a family that loves Him and lives for Him. His plan of redemption, to send His Son to be the Savior of all

mankind, started before the foundation of the world. But the plan doesn't only involve the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it includes us as well. We are a major component to His plan of redemption. Many people look at Jesus dying on the cross as a tragedy, something God was forced to do because man sinned, an afterthought or some reactionary measure as a result of Adam's sin. This is wrong thinking and incorrect. The cross, as harsh, and as bad as it may seem, was not a tragedy, but a complete success, and it was fulfilled exactly the way God had planned it from before He created the world.

Before mankind was created, He knew man would sin, He knew He would have to send His only Son as a sacrifice and payment for the transgression of man. He knew the cross was the only way to reconcile His family. This predetermined plan, set forth by the foreknowledge of God, was established and revealed thru His people on the earth. Everything God did with man was for the purpose of setting up and fulfilling His plan for the redemption of mankind. To make this plan come to fruition, God chose men on this earth to participate, piece by piece. Virtually every word of the Bible is God's plan to reconcile man. For the first four thousand years, God chose men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and the prophets, not to mention countless others, to bring Jesus into the world.

And what's more, He knew what each person was going to do and what decisions they would make before He even created them.

His plan includes us; He wants us involved with Him

His master plan, involving something as precious as the death of His Son, still includes us, and in fact, He would have it no other way. This is the love of God shown on us, that He would send His Son to die for us. But what is absolutely astounding is He wanted us involved every step of the way. I am sure in God's infinite knowledge and wisdom, He could have sent His Son to reconcile man and accomplished it between the three of them, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and left man completely out, so it would

"get done right". | know | have done this with my own kids, with something | considered too important to have them, or anyone else, involved that could potentially mess things up. This is selfish and wrong thinking. And this is exactly what God did not do. He, in fact, did the opposite. He purposely devised a plan that not only included us, but He made it so He couldn't do it without us. That is how much He loves us and wants to be a part of our lives.

The reconciliation of God and man was accomplished through Jesus on the cross, (2Cor 5:17-19). And it is because of Christ we are now set free from sin and have become children of God, calling God our Father, (Rom 8:15). But even before the cross, it was God's pleasure to work with the men of the Old Testament. Even with all their shortcomings and faults, as all of us still have today, God used these men to accomplish His plan and bring the Messiah into this world. These men of old could not be considered children of God because the reconciliation of man had not yet taken place, but it still gave God pleasure to work with them in the plan of redemption, and the ultimate goal of one day calling them His children. God created this universe with the full intension of sending His Son for our redemption, and He purposely wanted us involved. The only thing | can compare this to is when | have a project, and, yes, if | did it myself it would go faster and even possibly easier, but if | did the same project with my eleven-year-old son, and taught him along the way, and used the opportunity to spend time with him, the project would probably take twice as long, but the enjoyment and pleasure | would have during the process is more rewarding than if | had completed the project myself. This is what | believe God had in mind with us regarding His plan of redemption. He wants us to take part in the journey of this life with Him, and all the steps involved to fulfill the plan of redemption, eventually spending eternity with Him. He is not just interested in the future with us, He wants us now. He wants us spending our time with Him and getting involved with His plan now while we are on the earth. Even though the cross is accomplished and reconciliation is now here, there is much that still needs to take place to fulfill His plan, and we should be excited that we can be a part of it!

So now, with this thought in mind, let us look at a few scriptures in this new light.

Lk 12:32- Fear not, little flock; for it is your <u>Father's good</u> <u>pleasure</u> to give you the kingdom.

Do not fear, I will keep you safe. Your life in Me is redeemed from destruction and you will not perish, even the death of your physical body cannot separate you from Me.

For it brings the Father good pleasure to give the kingdom, the inheritance of life with Him, to those who love Him and want to spend time with Him.

Jn 16:33- These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation; but **be of good cheer, I have overcome the world**.

In the world, there will be tribulation and persecution, men will hate you because they hated Me, but rejoice, because great is your reward in heaven. This is My plan for you. I have overcome the world! Enjoy your time with Me, don't pay attention to the world, there is nothing to fear. Let's work on this plan I have made together, you and Me. We will have fun with it and will enjoy the time together. I'll teach you the things I know, and I'll train you in My ways. I love you and I want to spend My time with you.

How wonderful it is that the creator of the universe wants to spend His time with me!

Php 2:5- Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not think of equality with God as something to cling to, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, <u>He humbled Himself and became</u> <u>obedient</u> to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus came to this earth with a mission; to die on the cross and conquer sin and death. This was a major part of the plan of God, the central theme to the redemption of man, the climax of all the ages, **(Eph I:10)**. Jesus' focus on the earth was to work with the Father, one on one, to fulfill this plan. We need to have the same mindset Jesus had. We are on this earth, and we should be excited to get involved with the plan of God. We should be asking, what can I do to be a part of Your plan? I give you my life as your servant in Christ to help fulfill Your plan. I want to know You, I want to spend time with you, I trust you with my life, even unto death, because I know You have overcome the world, and I can be an overcomer just like You. I have security in knowing there is nothing that can separate me from Your love, and even in death, I am an overcomer in Christ, and will spend eternity with You.

Rev 12:11- And they **overcame** him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life **even when faced with death**.

There is one glaring association between these four verses: connect yourself with God. Even when faced with tribulation and persecution, even to the point of death, there is no reason to fear, because we will be spending eternity with Jesus, and the struggles of this life are all part of the plan, but these light afflictions, these momentary sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us, (Rom 8:18, 2Cor 4:17).

When you understand that nothing surprises God, even in tribulation, we can rejoice, for great is our reward in heaven. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. And even though we live in a fallen world, which seams completely out of control, in fact it is in complete control because God knows the end from the beginning, **(Is 46:10)**. God is not causing every single event to happen, but also, nothing surprises God. He knows the outcome of every event and decision, and has formulated this all into His plan of redemption. Does this mean God is the author of evil? Is God the cause of all the bad in this earth? No, God forbid. The corruption of sin is the reason for the evil in this world. God did not create it or cause

something bad to happen, and He is not "allowing" these bad things to happen to teach you something. It is the result of sin in this world; the corrupted sinful nature of man, living in a corrupted environment as a result of sin in this world. This is the meaning of Romans 8:28- And we know all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. All things work together because He knew the outcome of all things before the foundation of the world. Even though He is not causing all things to happen, He has formulated all things into His plan to result in good for those who are co-operating and those who love God. The NEB says it the best. "and in everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28^{NEB}). God is not causing all things to happen for our good, but it is His goodness, co-operating with those who love God, to fulfill his plan and purpose for the redemption of man.

Therefore, no matter what happens in this life, we can rejoice in the confidence we have in God, and actually get excited to join with God in His plan. Not only for the future glory, but for this life right now with Him. This is why Paul says: "I have <u>learned to be content</u> in whatever circumstances I am." (Philippians 4:11). Because he knows he has a better and lasting possession in Jesus.

No matter what happens in this life, God has equipped us to enjoy Him. He has given us all things to joyously give thanks to Him, (Col I:9-12, Heb 10:32-36, Eph 1:17-23). It is this journey of life that the Father wants to experience with us. It pleases Him when we have faith in Him, putting our full trust and confidence in Him, knowing we will be with Him forever, (Heb 11:6, Jn 14:3, 21, 23).

Therefore, there are rewards for living this life victoriously. As Christians, we all have eternal security with Him, which will be so outstanding we can't even comprehend it, but | want everything God has to offer, not from a selfish motive, but because it gives Him pleasure to reward those who are faithful. It gives me pleasure to serve Him and know

Him and give Him all that | have, because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. | want to be one with Him, and | want everything He will give me, because the more | have from Him, the more | know Him, the more | can learn from Him, the more | can experience His goodness and be completely satisfied in Him. When you have this desire for God, your outlook on life changes. You no longer are driven by selfish motivation, but you are motivated by fulfilling the plan of God. You are now living life for Him and not for yourself. The pleasures of this life become meaningless while the pleasures of the Father are now the most important thing in your life.

Having said this, we know justification is merely the beginning in our journey of salvation. It is not God's will to immediately take us out of this earth the instant we become born-again. God wants all of us to participate in His plan of redemption for mankind, and we cannot do this from the balconies of heaven. We need to be in the game, on the field; the game is the redemption of man and the field is the world.

John 17:15-20 - ¹⁵ "<u>I do not ask You to take them out of the</u> world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ <u>Sanctify them in</u> the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but <u>for those</u> also who believe in Me through their word."

God has given us His Word of Truth to enable us to endure the world. Just as Jesus said, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:14). We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are now of Jesus, ambassadors sent into the world to be fellow-workers with God. Therefore, we are <u>ambassadors for Christ</u>, (2 Corinthians 5:20^a).

We are fully equipped to be fellow-workers with God, and supplied with the necessary means to endure the persecutions of this world. He has

given us His Word, guided by the Holy Spirit, that we may have His joy made full in ourselves, **"But now I come to You; and these things** I speak in the world so that they may have <u>My joy made full</u> <u>in themselves</u>. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word". (John 17:13-14^a).

He has given us His Spirit-illuminated Word to endure this world and all its persecutions and tribulations. Colossians 1:9-12- ⁹ ... that you may be <u>filled with the knowledge of His will</u> in <u>all spiritual</u> <u>wisdom and understanding</u>, ¹⁰ so that you will <u>walk in a</u> <u>manner worthy of the Lord</u>, to please *Him* in all respects, <u>bearing fruit</u> in every good work and <u>increasing in the</u> <u>knowledge of God</u>; ¹¹ <u>strengthened</u> with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

| used to read this verse with the intent for a good, comfortable life, filled with endless pleasures and nothing lacking. Which is true, this verse does promise this, but not in the sense of worldly pleasures. That was my naïve and ignorant assumption. You don't use this verse to, "get what you want" from God. All these wonderful things this verse promises are not for worldly gain or status. It is for the "attaining of all steadfastness and patience". It is when this corrupt sinful world is hating and reviling you and speaking all manner of evil against you. It is when the corrupt effects of sin in this fallen world manifest itself in the form of a deadly disease, trying to tear apart a family. It is when your house and all your possessions are plundered for being a Christian. It is when your physical body is being tortured and mutilated because you will not deny the Name of Jesus. This is what this verse is for. It is for times like these in which we are filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to know Him and the love He has for us. It is for times like these for which He has given us His Word, enabling us to walk in a manner which shows the worth of Jesus to the unbelieving world. It is for times like these when we have this scripture to bear fruit in our lives, leading to the separation of sin,

and it is for these times of persecution for which He has strengthened us with His power, not of carnal power, but for endurance and steadfastness to overcome the evil one. He has promised us all these things to enable us to persevere in this wretched world. To overcome sin and evil, and joyously give thanks to the Father in the midst of vial persecution. This is the true and meaningful purpose of Colossians 1:9-12.

Hebrews 10:34- For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and <u>accepted joyfully the seizure of your property</u>, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Romans 8:18- Yet <u>what we suffer now is nothing compared to</u> <u>the glory</u> he will reveal to us later.

2 Corinthians 4:17- For <u>our light affliction</u>, which is <u>but for a</u> <u>moment</u>, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

We are ambassadors for Christ with the purpose of fulfilling the plan of God, namely the reconciliation of mankind to his Creator. Sanctification is a necessary requirement in participating in this plan of God. It is the process of controlling your flesh, setting it apart from sin and directing it in the way of the Lord. "Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." (Genesis 4:7^b).

Once our spirit is sanctified by the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, **(Rom 8:16)**; this is only done by the blood of Jesus and His work on the cross. We cannot in any way add to this work performed on the cross. Jesus justified us and made us righteous. He gave us a new spirit and a new life, **"And I** will give them one heart, and <u>put a new spirit within them</u>. (Ezekiel 11:19).

Only by Him have we been raised from death to life in Him. This is the free-gift of grace, it is not of ourselves lest any man should boast,

(Eph 2:8-9); but this is just the beginning to everything God has in store for us.

He wants us to participate in His plan of redemption for man; one that He established before the foundation of the world, and now, having decided to make Jesus the Lord of your life, you can start to participate in something greater than anything this world can offer; abundant life with Him, full of unexplainable joy to the full, starting now and lasting for all eternity with Him.

If you have been made a new creation in Christ Jesus, it is your responsibility to walk by the Spirit and resist the flesh. This starts by making a conscience decision to always choose Jesus in everything you do. Ask yourself, before making a decision, what choice will glorify the Father the most?

Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven, Matt 5:16

Choose to walk by the Spirit and this will lead you away from the flesh and destruction, (Gal 5:16). This is a daily process that separates the soul from the way of the world, including its sin and corruption, and connects it with the way of the Lord and His Spirit. Therefore, <u>putting aside</u> all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility <u>receive the word</u> implanted, <u>which is able to save</u> <u>your souls</u>. (James 1:21).

Sanctification is the process of separating sin from your soul. When one confesses Jesus as Lord and believes in their heart that He was raised from the dead, the Word of God, which is sharper than any twoedged sword, cuts the old, dead spirit away from the soul, and replaces it with a newly created spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, (Heb 4:12). The spirit, from this point, has been made new, a new creation in Christ Jesus, a born-again child of God, (2Cor 5:17), giving your soul the fuel and power to make every decision for Him. I explain this with much more detail in the first volume, in the chapter called: The Process of Obtaining Freedom in Christ, step 5-Born Again.

The soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions. This is most commonly referred to in the Bible as the heart. The soul was designed to be led by the life force of the spirit, but when sin corrupted the lineage of mankind, the human spirit became dead, unable to produce life, and the sinful nature became the master of the soul. Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and <u>death</u> <u>through sin</u>, and so <u>death spread to all men</u>, because all sinned—" Ephesians 2:11 "And you were <u>dead in your trespasses</u> and sins". ^{Colossians} 2:13 "When <u>you were dead in your</u> <u>transgressions</u> …" ^{Ephesians} 4:18 "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God …" ^{Colossians 1:21} "… you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds."

The soul was subject to the obligations of the sinful nature. The sin nature bound the soul, forcing it to the selfish urges of sin leading to death.

Romans 8:5-7- "Those who are <u>dominated by the sinful</u> <u>nature</u> think about sinful things, ... So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death... For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will."

Romans 6:23- "For the wages of sin is death, ..."

The spirit was no longer the life force of the soul, but the soul must still have a master. Therefore, since the spirit was dead, it turned to the sinful nature as its master. Every human, born under the seed of Adam, is born with a dead spirit, a corrupted soul, dominated by the sin nature. The sinful nature is hostile to God, it cannot choose God, and is not even able to do so, (Rom 8:5-8). But when the life has been reborn as a child of God, it has the free-will choice to choose the things of God. It is no longer under the bondage of sin and forced to live by the obligations of the sinful nature, but it must allow the Holy Spirit to be the driving force of its life. When the soul is in-line and walking by the Spirit, the fruit of the spirit is

portrayed thru the soul. Our soul is the outward expression of our master. It will either portray the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the sinful nature, the flesh. The soul, under the direction of the reborn life, driven by the life-force of the newly created spirit, has the free will choice to live and walk by the Spirit. Or it can enslave itself back under the bondage of the sinful nature. Evangelical free will gives the Christian the choice to live this life in line and conformed to the Holy Spirit and God's Word, or he can choose to live according to the sinful nature, regardless of his newly created spirit. Even though the spirit may be born again and made a new creation in Christ, the soul must be renewed and trained to follow the Spirit, (James 3:2-18).

The sanctification of the soul is the process of renewing the mind, will, and emotions to walk in line and live according to the Holy Spirit, separating ourselves from the sin of the world.

The Holy Spirit will not force itself on the soul and demand changes. God has given us free will and a choice how to live our life. This is the part of us He loves so much. He wants us to choose Him. He knows if we choose Him and walk in His ways, our joy will be made full, ^{Psalm 16:11} "You will make known to me the path of life; <u>In Your presence is fullness of joy</u>; In Your right hand there are <u>pleasures</u> <u>forever</u>." ^{John 15:11} "These things I have spoken to you so that <u>My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full</u>." ^{IPeter 1:8} "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, <u>you</u> <u>greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory</u>."

••••

Our life in this can be so full of joy that no other pleasure can even compare to the joy the bas in store for us.

God created us with a soul to make decisions and choose for ourselves how we live our life. He knows, if we choose Him, and if it is solely our decision, this is the fullness of life and the way to true eternal happiness. Therefore, let us fight the good fight, and choose to be ambassadors for Christ.



~61~

Make Jesus Your Treasure

~62~



od created mankind with an innate yearning to serve. He did this with the intent to make us happy and give us eternal joy in Him. When we serve God, we please Him, and at the same time we are fulfilling our purpose which gives us eternal joy.

God wants us to serve Him because He knows in Him is the fullness of joy and pleasures forever, (**Ps 16:11**). There is nothing in this world that can come close to this type of satisfaction.

Jesus urges us to make Him our treasure because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21-¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves <u>treasures in</u> <u>heaven</u>, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for <u>where your treasure is,</u> <u>there your heart will be also</u>."

God wants us to serve Him, but He will not force us. Because of our freedom in Christ, we can choose whom we will serve. Who or what will be the most important thing in our life? God or this world? "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Matthew 6:24).

So many Christians, especially in America, are double minded, luke warm, neither hot nor cold. They call themselves Christians, but yet they serve the world. They confess Jesus as Lord, but with their actions they despise Him and shove Him in the corner. In the world today, you are considered a "good Christian" if you attend church regularly and generally try to be a good person. While these are things a Christian does, this shouldn't be all he does. The person who makes Jesus the most important thing in their life doesn't just act like a Christian when it is

Make Jesus Your Treasure

convenient, they live as a Christian. When Jesus is the treasure of your life, He is all you think about. He is the desire of your heart and the thing you want to spend your time on. Time on this earth is probably our most precious commodity because it is something we all have a limited amount of. And it is what you choose to spend your time on that really shows what you consider important. A "good Christian", according to worldly standards, might be someone who spends 30 minutes a day reading the bible or praying to God, and a couple of hours on Sunday going to church. To put this in perspective, this kind of dedication, which to the world seems fairly dedicated, only results in about 5 hours per week. There are 168 hours in one week. This is only about 3% of your time dedicated to God, and this is what the world considers devoted. The amount of time spent with God, does not give you eternal life with Jesus, it is only by the grace of God we are made righteous, not by any works of our own, but our involvement with Him now, will affect the type of eternal life we will have with Him. If all you are concerned about is not going to hell, if Jesus is nothing more than just a fire insurance policy, then you can make the choice to live however you choose in this life. But if you want the best Jesus has to offer, with the fullness of joy and pleasures forever, then you need to make Jesus your treasure. Jesus needs to be the most important thing and the biggest part of your life. If Jesus is your treasure, He should be in every decision you make. Ask yourself before you make any decision, "Will this glorify God?" If it does, then do it, if it doesn't, then don't do it, simple as that. If you start to live your life to please Him, you will notice your desire will be to spend time with Him. Every minute will be with Him, at work, at play, in your marriage, with your kids, even while you sleep. Ask Him to be in your life all the time. Involve Him in everything you do. God wants this. His greatest desire is you.

God paid a costly price to have you. He gave this Son so the could spend time with you.

Make Jesus Your Treasure

Isaiah 28:16- Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, <u>A costly cornerstone for</u> <u>the foundation</u>, firmly placed. He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed."

Acts 20:28- ... shepherd the church of God which <u>He</u> purchased with His own blood.

1 Corinthians 7:23- <u>You were bought with a price</u>; do not become slaves of men.

¹ Peter 1:18–19-¹⁸ knowing that you were not <u>redeemed with</u> perishable things ... ¹⁹ but with <u>precious blood, as of a lamb</u> <u>unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ</u>.

There are two parables which demonstrate this love He has for us. God has not asked us to do anything He didn't first do Himself. The best leaders are the ones who lead by example. The Father has shown this to us through His Son Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16). Jesus tells us to sell everything we have and follow Him, "If you wish to <u>be complete</u>, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have <u>treasure in heaven</u>; and come, <u>follow Me</u>." (Matthew 19:21). Jesus is not asking us to do something which He hasn't already done Himself. Just as we are to see Jesus as our treasure, the Father sees us as His treasure as well. This may seem unbelievable, but it is true. God loves us so much He sold His most prize possession, His Son, to redeem us from destruction.

Matthew 13:44-46-44 "The kingdom of heaven is like a **treasure hidden in the field**, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and <u>sells all that he has and buys that field</u>.

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one <u>pearl of great value</u>, he went and <u>sold all that he had and bought it</u>."

Many people read these verses thinking this is a parable of us seeking God, selling everything we have to obtain a great treasure. This is true, but these parables are actually about God selling everything He has to purchase us! Let's look at the first parable again. It says, "there was a treasure in the field, which a man found and hid." The treasure is mankind and the field is the world. But why does it say He hid the treasure after He found it? Why didn't He unbury the treasure right then? The answer is in the next part of the parable. From joy over the treasure, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. God couldn't rescue us until He paid the price for sin. He had to send His Son as the payment for sin so we might be made righteous through Jesus. He had to keep us hidden until the appointed time, the climax of all the ages, the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus, paying the price and redeeming us from sin and death. The plan of redemption had to be kept hidden. It had to remain a mystery until the appointed time, "The hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" (I Corinthians 2:7-8). The plan of redemption, the mystery of the cross, had to be kept hidden, otherwise, if Satan would have known this plan, he would not have crucified Jesus. But now, Jesus has paid the price for our redemption, tetelestai, and conquered sin and death, allowing Him to obtain His treasure. He has reconciled us to Him, (2Cor 5:18-19, Gal 1:4, 3:13, 1Pet 3:18, 1Thes 5:10). He sold everything He had so He could have us, and He did it with joy. "Jesus, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross." (Hebrews 12:2). God saw us as a precious treasure and in turn wants this to be an example for us toward Him. Paul tells us in Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ... (make Jesus your example), He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8).

The second parable, the pearl of great price, is like the first. "Upon finding one <u>pearl of great value</u>, he went and <u>sold all that he</u>

<u>had and bought it</u>." Let this be our example. Let us see Jesus as our greatest treasure. That we would joyfully sell or give away everything we have and follow Him. "for you joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a <u>better and an enduring</u> <u>possession for yourselves in heaven</u>." (Hebrews 10:34).

Moses knew this and even though he could have had all the wealth of Egypt, he chose God as a greater treasure.

Hebrews 11:24–26-²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ <u>choosing</u> rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ <u>greater riches than the treasures of Egypt</u>; for he was <u>looking to the reward</u>.

When you make Jesus your treasure, you will love Him and keep His Word. Jesus in turn tells us, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23). This is what Jesus meant when He said, "If you abide in Me, and <u>My words abide in</u> you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; <u>so</u> you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; <u>abide in My love</u>. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that <u>your</u> joy may be full." (John 15:7-11).

When the Father and Jesus have made their home with you, "We now have this <u>Light</u> shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this <u>great treasure</u>." (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Philippians 2:15–16-¹⁵ prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, <u>among whom you appear</u> <u>as lights in the world</u>, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life. Remember this and make Jesus your priority. Spend your time with Him and you will see the benefit of living for Him. Give Him your all, because Jesus gave us His all.

This is making Jesus your treasure.



Press on Toward the Prize of the high Galling

anctification is separating yourself from the sin of the world and anything exalting itself against the knowledge of God, pressing forward toward the prize of the high calling, and choosing to make Jesus your treasure.

Philippians 3:7-21-7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; " in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; ... ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Sanctification is humbling yourself to His plan and His will after your spirit has been made a new creation in Christ. So many Christians think

their justification is the end to salvation, but they are incorrect. It is merely the beginning.

~69~

When you read Paul's epistles, you get a sense of urgency in his letters. And if you didn't know any better, you might think he is paranoid about losing his justification. But of course, we know that is not the case. So, what is this urgency in Paul's writing that we must take heed to? It is the journey of salvation, namely the lifelong adventure with God toward sanctification, and ultimately the inheritance of our glorified state in Him, the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. The first example of Scripture is one we have already read, but it is worded from the New Living Translation. This transcription of Philippians displays this urgency Paul is striving for:

Philippians 3:12–14-¹² I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I <u>press on to possess that perfection</u> for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and <u>looking forward to what lies ahead</u>, ¹⁴ <u>I press on toward the goal, to reach the end of the race</u>, the <u>prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.</u>

Pursue Jesus

Twice in these three verses, Paul uses the word $\delta\iota\omega\kappa\omega$, dioko- to pursue, strive for, press forward. This same word is used a total of 21 times throughout all his epistles; 11 of these 21 are associated with striving and pursuing Jesus, the other 10 of persecution. We will discuss the topic of persecution in its own chapter. For the time being and this chapter, we will focus on Paul's admonition of striving and pursuing Jesus.

-->·-

Romans 14:19- So then <u>we pursue the things</u> which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Paul tells us in striving and pursuing Jesus, we should be pursuing the things which make for peace. What are those things? And what does he mean by peace? Paul gives us a list of those "things" in which we are to pursue: "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, <u>dwell on these things</u>." (Philippians 4:8). This is an account, a checklist for the soul to keep it in line with God. These are the things to pursue in life. If what you are pursuing does not fall into this list, lay it aside, and only focus on the things which will give the Father praise. It is by this way of life which shows the worth of Jesus shining forth, "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." (Colossians 1:10).

In the same verse, Romans 4:19, Paul tells us we must pursue peace and the building up of one another. Peace with men is a misunderstood term. We are to pursue peace, but does this mean we must tolerate all men in order to bring harmony? Nonsense. Biblical peace does not suggest toleration. Jesus was a perfect example of this. "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, ... He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; ... He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 10:34-39). Is this a contradiction to the announcement from the angels at Jesus' birth? "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." (Luke 2:14). The angels are not declaring all men will live in peace and tolerate each other, but that our Peace has come, and all those who find Jesus will have this peace. "And His name will be called Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6). "For He Himself is our peace." (Ephesians 2:14).

Biblical peace is not toleration, but unification in Him. When we are in Him, we have peace. This results in the building up of one another.

Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling

"regard one another as more important than yourselves;" (Philippians 2:3). Toleration is not love. If you see someone who does not believe in Jesus, they are lost and destined for eternal damnation and torment. If you ignore this, and tolerate their decisions, you are aiding them into a life of destruction. They need to hear Jesus and the peace and joy they can have in Him. This is the deepest love we can have for someone; to not let them flounder in deception, but instead admonish them in God's goodness.

Hebrews 12:14- <u>Pursue peace</u> with all men and <u>sanctification</u>; without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Again, Paul urges us to pursue peace with all men, but as we learned above, it is not toleration, but guiding them into Peace. Paul then mentions the pursuit of sanctification. Clearly this is not the sanctification of the spirit, but of the soul, but notice the importance he places on sanctification. He says no one will see the Lord unless they are set apart. This reminds me of something Jesus said, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." (John 14:21). It is those that pursue Him and love Him that He will reveal Himself to. Does this mean those who do not pursue sanctification will go to hell? No, our justification is not associated with our merit or actions, but solely on the work of Christ and our faith in Him, but those who do not pursue Jesus will not participate in His inheritance. They may not burn eternally in the lake of fire, but they certainly will not have all that Jesus has in store for them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name, drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:21-23).

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the

Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling

kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out." (Luke 13:28). Were these people not allowed into the kingdom of heaven cast into the lake of fire? Maybe not. Just because a person does not enter the kingdom, does not necessarily mean they will experience the second death. I believe this may be what the outer darkness is. I don't think the outer darkness is hell, or the lake of fire, it is my conjecture that the outer darkness is a place outside the kingdom of Light. This is why there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. They can still see the kingdom, but they cannot enter into it, (Matt 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). These are harsh statements, and I know, very controversial, but this is why Paul is so adamant about pursuing Jesus. He doesn't want anyone to miss out on all God has to offer. Below are a few more examples of Paul's use of the word $\delta\iota\omega\kappa\omega$, dioko:

2 Timothy 2:22- Now flee from youthful lusts and <u>pursue</u> righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

1 Timothy 6:11- But flee from these things, you man of God, and <u>**pursue**</u> righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.

Romans 12:13- contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing** hospitality.

I Thessalonians 5:15- See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always <u>seek after</u> that which is good for one another and for all people.

<+>.

Lay aside the old self

Another action word we see in the New Testament, mostly from Paul, is the term "to lay aside"- $\dot{\alpha}\pi\sigma\tau(\theta\eta\mu\iota$, apothemenoi- take off, stop

oneself, put away. In conjunction with pursuing Jesus, we must lay aside our old self. This one thing we must remember in the pursuit of sanctification, we cannot sanctify ourselves. Even though it is our free-will choice making the decisions to choose God, we must invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to change our lives. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16). You will never be able to stop sinning on your own. You must move yourself into the will of the Spirit, letting Him guide you into all Truth. It is then, and only then, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. It is human nature, namely pride, to want to make yourself perfect and then come to Jesus. But without Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to perfect yourself without Him. God does not require this, in fact, it is the opposite. He wants you "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (I Peter 5:7). This is why Jesus came and gave Himself for us. He is our Savior. He didn't wait till we were perfect before He came. Nonsense, He came because we are not perfect and only through Him can we be made whole. Romans 5:6 "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:8 "God demonstrating His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God alone is the decisive deliverer from this slavery, and our part-which is real and crucial-is dependent on His. We don't free ourselves; we have "been freed." And ultimately, we don't make ourselves slaves of God, we have been "enslaved" to God. Behind these passive verbs is the work of God. This is what happens "under grace." When Christ is our righteousness by faith, the grace of God enters us mightily, and breaks the power of cancelled sin, and transforms us in the renewing of our minds, and writes the law upon our hearts, and gives us a new spirit, and inclines us to the Word of God, and causes us to see the beauty of Christ and his ways as the treasure of our lives.³

³ Piper, J. (2014). Sermons from John Piper (2000–2014). Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God.

We cannot lay aside our old self and then pursue Jesus. Instead, you must pursue Jesus and make Him your treasure, and it is then, through the power of the Holy Spirit inside you, that we can lay aside our old self.

Ephesians 4:22- In reference to your former manner of life, you <u>lay aside the old self</u>, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.

Ephesians 4:25- Therefore, <u>laying aside</u> falsehood, <u>SPEAK TRUTH</u> EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Hebrews 12:1- Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, <u>let us also lay aside every</u> <u>encumbrance and the sin</u> which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

James 1:21- Therefore, <u>putting aside all filthiness</u> and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility <u>receive the word</u> implanted, which is able to save your souls.

1 Peter 2:1- Therefore, <u>putting aside all malice</u> and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Colossians 3:8-9-⁸ But now you also, <u>put them all aside</u>: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since <u>you laid aside the old self</u> <u>with its evil practices</u>,

We cannot lay aside our sinful nature by our own power, but it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we will not satisfy the flesh. Therefore, pursue Jesus and the Truth of His Word, and lay aside the old self. "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." (Romans 6:6-7).

Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling

≺•≻••≻──

~75~

Consider yourself dead to sin, and alive to God

Just as Jesus died and was made alive for us, we also must die to sin and become alive in Him. This is the power of Grace working in us. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, <u>made us alive together</u> with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 2:4-6).

When a person accepts Jesus as their Savior, the old spirit is cut off and a new spirit is given them, perfect and without sin. Just as Jesus died and was buried, and then was made alive again, so also are we who believe in Him. Our old, dead spirit is cut off and buried and we are given a new, perfect spirit, made as a new creation with new life, born-again in Him as a child of God. Our soul is freed from the bondage of sin and connected to our new spirit, able to choose Jesus freely. However, the soul is not remade like the spirit. Therefore, it must be renewed and brought to life through the Spirit.

When the old, unregenerate soul was under the bondage of sin, the sinful nature ruled it and was in control. But now, as a child of God, bornagain with new life and given a new spirit, our soul has two choices: 1) it has the free-will to choose the newly created spirit as its master, which is protected, ruled, and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit living within them, or, 2) the soul has the choice to stay under the bondage of sin, enslaved to the sinful nature, ^{I Peter 2:II} "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to <u>abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war</u> <u>against the soul</u>." ^{Romans 6:I4-I6} "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ... Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, <u>you are slaves of the one whom you obey</u>, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?" Every Christian must make the decision to be crucified with Christ. This means our sinful nature, the old self, must be crucified with Him, "buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4). We have been given a new life because our spirit has been made new, but in order to walk in this new life, to be able to experience, enjoy, and participate in this abundant life, we must make the decision, on a daily basis, to crucify the flesh and make Jesus our Master. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23).

Paul tells us to, "<u>consider</u> yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, <u>do not let sin reign</u> in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts," (Romans 6:11-12). This is our decision. We have two action words in the above statement. We must <u>consider</u>, which means we have a choice, and we must <u>not let sin reign</u>. Again, telling us we have a choice to let sin reign or not. This is the battle between the flesh and the spirit, ^{Romans 8:6-7} "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God." ^{Galatians 5:17} "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." So, it is our responsibility, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to deny the flesh, the old sinful nature, and live in Christ.

Galatians 5:24- Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have <u>crucified the flesh</u> with its passions and desires.

Romans 6:6- knowing this, that our <u>old self was crucified</u> with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 8:13- for if you are living according to the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are <u>putting to death</u> <u>the deeds of the body</u>, you will live.

Colossians 3:5- So <u>put to death the sinful</u>, earthly things lurking within you.

These decisions do not affect the state of the newly created spirit. When the spirit is made a new creation in Christ Jesus, it is covered by the blood of Jesus and is in perfect unison with God. The sinful nature cannot affect the newly created spirit's purity in any way, but it can affect its fruitfulness, its effectiveness in the kingdom of God. The soul is the expression of the spirit in this physical world, so if the soul is still under the bondage of the sinful nature, it is enslaved to sin instead of enslaved to God, the newly created spirit is bound, and will not produce any fruit. This is why Paul is urging us to "pursue Jesus", "lay aside the old self", "consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God". These are all decisions of the soul and can only make the right decision to choose God through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Jesus said, ^{Luke 9:23} "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must <u>deny himself</u>, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." ^{Matthew 16:25-27} "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but <u>whoever loses his life</u> for My sake will find it</u>. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and <u>WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS</u>."

This is a decision of the soul that will affect the fruitfulness of the spirit. The spirit does not have the ability to choose. This is why we have a soul. The soul is our decision maker, it is our mind, will, and emotions. It is our daily responsibility to walk in the newness of life by making the daily decision to pursue Jesus and crucify the flesh. The only way to effectively do this is by the Spirit-illuminated Word of God. He will guide you into all Truth, (Jn 16:13). Before you make a decision, ask yourself this simple question, will the outcome of this decision please God? God will honor your decision, especially if you are sincere from the heart. Don't be afraid of making a mistake. "there is now no condemnation for those

who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). You probably will make a mistake, but God isn't concerned with the mistakes as much as He wants your heart, namely your soul, yearning for Him. As you practice in this continually, you will find yourself making the right decision for Him without having to even think about it. It will become natural, and your sinful nature will be suppressed and the newly created spirit thriving in Him.

<->. <->

Let us Run the Race that is Set Before Us

Numerous times, Paul relates this physical life to a race, desperate to finish well and winning. Again, as we have seen in the previous sections, these are decisions we must make after we are born-again. These are not works meant to achieve righteousness, but through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, we are being sanctified, set apart from the world as we make the decisions to choose Him. This connects us with His plan and we become fellow-workers with God, showing the worth of Jesus in all we do.

Below are several of Paul's writings to portray this theme.

Hebrews 12:1-2-1 ... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² <u>fixing our eyes on Jesus</u>, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Notice these action words, "let us run", "fixing our eyes on Jesus", "for the joy"; these are everyday decisions to continually pursue our Treasure, Jesus.

Jesus is our example. Paul tells us we should have the same mindset that was also in Christ Jesus, (Phil 2:5). Jesus humbled Himself to the plan of God, and became obedient to death, (Phil 2:8), so that we might

Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling

have life in Him. He endured the cross, not grudgingly, but with joy, disregarding the shame of the cross, (Ps 69:19, 22:6-7), and now exalted by the Father and seated at His right hand, (Ps 110:1, Phil 2:9, Mk 16:19).

Making the continual decisions to choose Him, and pursue Him will ultimately give us the most joy and endless happiness. Just as the Father exalted Jesus for His obedience, He will do the same for us, "Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time," (I Peter 5:6).

We must recognize this constant pursuit for Jesus as a race to the finish, something to strive continually and joyfully for. Pressing on to maturity, joyfully and confidently looking forward to sharing in God's glory, keeping our eye on the prize, which ultimately is the glorification in Jesus. Not merely obtaining our glorified bodies, but becoming one with Jesus, unified in marriage and glorified in Him as one body.

Colossians 2:18- Let no one keep defrauding you <u>of your</u> <u>prize</u>...

Hebrews 6:1- Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, <u>let us press on to maturity</u>...

Romans 5:2- ... we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

2 Timothy 4:7-8-7 I have fought the good fight, I have <u>finished</u> <u>the race</u>, and I have remained faithful. ⁸ And now <u>the prize</u> <u>awaits me</u>—<u>the crown of righteousness</u>, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And <u>the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look</u> <u>forward to his appearing.</u>

I Corinthians 9:24-27-²⁴ Do you not know that those who <u>run</u> <u>in a race all run</u>, but only <u>one receives the prize</u>? Run in such a way that you <u>may win</u>. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games <u>exercises self-control in all things</u>. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an <u>imperishable</u>. ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I <u>discipline my body</u> and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself <u>will not be disqualified.</u>

Disqualified from what? Is Paul scared to lose his salvation? No, of course not. He is aiming for the prize. He wants to win the race and obtain Jesus as his reward. But where there is a champion, there is dedication and sacrifice, self-control, and discipline in all things. To win and receive the prize takes focus and determination. In the world, we call this strong willed, but it is really enslaving your soul to God and His plan. Not necessarily having a strong will, in fact, it is the opposite of a strong, independent will, but a humble will. A will dedicated to God, strong in Him and not in self, humbling your soul to the plan of God and His righteousness, and not the will or desires of the flesh.

Paul dedicated his life to the pursuit of Jesus. His primary focus was to please God, and fulfill the plan which was set forth before him; to run the race of life and finish well, so that he would not be disqualified. But what was he so paranoid about being disqualified from? Below are seven rewards promised to the faithful. These seven rewards are what I believe Paul was referring to.

- > The resurrection of the dead, (Phil 3:11)
- > An imperishable wreath, (ICor 9:25)
- > The crown of righteousness, (ITim 4:8)
- > The Bema seat judgment, (2Cor 5:10)
- > The inheritance of Jesus, (Rom 8:17)
- > The Marriage of the Lamb, (Rev 19:7-8)
- > The adoption as sons, (Gal 4:5, Rom 8:17, 23, Phil 3:14)

This list of rewards has one thing in common, Jesus. Jesus is ultimately our reward, our inheritance, our prize. We should be striving to be closer to Him every minute of our life. This list is not our hope, but it is the benefits of our hope in Jesus. Every item on this list points to Jesus and allows us to be closer to Him. This is the ultimate goal, - to be glorified

Press on Toward the Prize of the High Calling

in Him, in one body, unified together in Him forever. This is a list of achievements allowing us the privilege of being closer to Him. This may come as a shock to a lot of Christians, but we are not all going to be equal in the ages to come. The only thing equal is our justification. Everything else is a result of our faithfulness to Him. Hebrews II:6 "He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

This is why Paul was so intent on earnestly seeking Jesus. He wanted to obtain everything Jesus had to offer. Not for selfish gain, but to please God and have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.

This afore mentioned list of seven rewards to the faithful should be studied intently. In this second volume, we will dedicate an entire chapter on the resurrection of the dead. We will finish discussing the other six rewards in the third volume which will focus on Glorification.



Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead

he resurrection of the dead can occur only through God Almighty, by the power of the Holy Spirit, (Rom 8:11). There are two types of the dead being raised in the Scripture. (1)- "Women received back their dead by

<u>resurrection</u>; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they, (2)- <u>might obtain a better resurrection</u>." (Hebrews 11:35).

"Women received back their dead by resurrection", this is the resurrection of the physical body, as if someone died physically, being brought back to life, only to eventually die again physically. This is a temporal resurrection. A few examples of this are Lazarus, (Jn 11:1-44), the woman's son at Nain, (Lk 7:11-15), Jairus' daughter, (Mk 5:22-24, 35-43), Elijah raises the widow's son, (1Kings 17:17-24), Elisha raises the Shunammite's son, (2Kings 4:18-37), and Peter raises Tabitha from the dead, (Acts 9:36-41).

All of these people were raised from the dead, but only temporarily. They all died again physically. The first person we see raised from the dead, never to return to the grave is Jesus. He obtained "the better resurrection" referred to in Hebrews 11:35. God raised Him up, not with a physical body as we know it, but a glorified body. The glorified body of Jesus is not an incorporeal being. He has flesh and bone but does not have blood, (Lk 24:39). His blood is in the Holy of Holies in heaven, (Heb 9:11-12), and the glory of God is now running thru His veins, (Jn 17:5). The glorified body of Jesus will never die, it is alive forever, "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and <u>I was dead</u>, and behold, <u>I am alive forevermore</u>, and I have the keys of death and of hell." (Revelation 1:17-18). And we have the promise to receive this same glorified body. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus

Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:20-21). | believe this is what Paul meant in Philippians when he said, "in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:11). Paul is not striving for his justification, for justification does not come from our works. One cannot attain to justification. It is not by works or merit of our own, only by the work of Jesus on the cross, (Eph 2:8-9). Also, just the fact of being raised from the dead isn't something to attain to either; for everyone who has lived will be raised from the dead to be judged in the end. Even sinners destined for the lake of fire will be raised from the dead and given an immortal body to live in torment forever. Daniel 12:2 "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, some to everlasting life, some to disgrace and everlasting contempt." Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

So, what is this resurrection from the dead that Paul wants to attain to? | believe he is referring to the rapture, the catching away of the saints. The rapture is not just for those still living on the earth, but will also raise up those who are in the body of Christ who have died physically. These who have died physically, and are included in the body of Christ, are waiting in heaven to receive their glorified bodies. The rapture is the appointed time in which God unites the newly created spirit of a man with his glorified body. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Contrary to popular belief, not all Christians will participate in the rapture. This may come as a surprise to some of you, but the resurrection of the dead, namely the rapture, is something we strive to attain to. It is not something that automatically happens just because you are a Christian. Justification is the only automatic assurance we have that has nothing to do with our own works. Justification will ensure whoever believes in Jesus will not burn in the lake of fire forever. However, you must ask yourself, is my Christianity just a fire insurance policy, keeping me out of the flames of hell, or am | using my Christianity to fulfill my purpose in the kingdom of God? Am | giving my life to Jesus and making Him my treasure. Is He the most important thing in my life? There is a big difference between the one who makes Jesus their treasure and the one who doesn't live life any differently than a sinner, and only has his justification to escape the torment of hell. | believe it is those who live for Jesus, those that make Him their treasure, the Christians who are waiting expectantly for the Lord's return and have prepared themselves, and the body of Christ for His coming; it is these who will participate in the rapture. Revelation 2:3-5 "You have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." Revelation 3:2-3 "Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."

While Jesus was on the earth, He gave several parables and examples explaining the readiness we should have for Him. Jesus was very clear as to the mindset we must have in waiting for Him. He wants us alert and ready. Not distracted with the things of the world, but focused on Him. We should be expectant and watchful for Jesus' return. Sharp and vigilant, expecting Him at any minute. Jesus will only come as a thief in the

Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead

night for those who are not prepared for Him. If you are expecting someone into your house, this person is considered a visitor and welcomed. If you are not expecting someone, and they come anyway, this person would be a thief and not welcomed. We want to be expecting Jesus and welcome Him at His return. By reading the following Scriptures, we start to gain concept of the urgency Paul is referring to. Jesus is persuading us to choose Him and He wants us to be ready and expecting Him.

Luke 21:34-36-³⁴ "<u>Be on guard</u>, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and <u>that day will not come on you suddenly</u> <u>like a trap</u>; ³⁵ for it will come upon all those <u>who dwell</u> on the face of all the earth. (those who make this world their treasure and consider this world and temporal life more important than the life to come) ³⁶ But <u>keep on the alert at all times</u>, praying that you may have <u>strength to escape all these things</u> that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 12:35-48-35 "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. ³⁶ Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. ³⁸ Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹ But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." ⁴¹ Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?" ⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 44 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

⁴⁵ But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, *both* men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶ <u>the master of</u> <u>that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him</u> and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and <u>assign him a place with the unbelievers</u>. ⁴⁷ And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, ⁴⁸ but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

The parable of the ten virgins gives us an insight to the rapture. The ten virgins are Christians, but 5 of them do not have the oil for their lamps. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. All ten virgins had oil at one time. You cannot be a Christian without the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart, (Jn 3:3-6, 14:17, Rom 8:14, Eph 4:30). These ten virgins were all Christians, but five of them let their oil run out and quenched His fire by their unbelief and un-readiness, (IThes 5:19). This doesn't mean they lost their salvation. They merely forfeited their rewards and inheritance in heaven. They missed out on one of the most important events in a Christian's life, the catching away of the saints. Paul tells us in Thessalonians, before the Tribulation can take place, the one restraining lawlessness must be removed. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." (2 Thessalonians 2:7). We, as Christians, vessels containing the Holy Spirit, are the ones restraining lawlessness. Because we are ambassadors for Christ on the earth, every day we are hindering the evil one from complete lasciviousness, unhindered lawlessness without any restraints. Although it seems this world could not get any worse, in truth, it can. Christians are restraining lawlessness by giving hope to the world. It is the Light shining through us, showing the goodness of God, leading people to repentance. If that Light is no longer on the earth, lawlessness has free reign with no inhibitions or restraints.

Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead

~87~

This is a world that will usher in the anti-christ and begin the 70th week of Daniel, the tribulation. If you have quenched the Holy Spirit, and the Light is not shining through you, you are not hindering or restraining lawlessness, and therefore, will not be removed from the earth at the time of the rapture. This parable of the Ten Virgins teaches us to be prepared and keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our life so that we might escape the things to come.

Matthew 25:1-13-1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, **they took** no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ <u>Be on the alert</u> then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

When the bridegroom came, this is Jesus, those who had the oil, Christians who did not quench the fire of the Holy Spirit, went with Jesus into the marriage feast. They were prepared and expecting Him, but those who did not have the oil, left to buy some, but it was too late, they were not prepared. These foolish virgins evidently had lamps that were burning at one time, but they were going out. They had the fire of the Holy Spirit burning at one point in their life, but they quenched His fire by their unbelief and un-readiness, (IThes 5:19). Jesus had come and the door was shut. They were not prepared and were not expecting the Lord

Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead

to come. "For in the case of those who have <u>once been</u> <u>enlightened</u> and have <u>tasted of the heavenly gift</u> and have been made <u>partakers of the Holy Spirit</u>, and have <u>tasted the</u> <u>good word of God</u> and the powers of the age to come, and then have <u>fallen away</u>, it is <u>impossible to renew them again to</u> <u>repentance</u>, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned." (Hebrews 6:4-8).

Mark 13:31-37-³¹ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³² But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³³ <u>Take heed, keep on the alert</u>; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come. ³⁴ *It is* like a man away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to <u>stay on the alert</u>. ³⁵ Therefore, <u>be on the alert</u>—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ What I say to you I say to all, '<u>Be on the alert</u>!'"

^{Matthew 24:37-39} "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and <u>they</u> <u>did not understand</u> until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be." ^{Luke 17:28-34} "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; ²⁹ but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. ³² Remember Lot's wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; <u>one will be taken</u> and the other will be left." ^{Matthew 24:40-42} "Then there will be two men in the field; <u>one will</u> be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; <u>one will be taken</u> and one will be left. ⁴² Therefore <u>be on the alert</u>, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Do not be slothful and lazy with your Christianity. Take it seriously, be alert, on guard and ready. Now is the acceptable time, **(2Cor 6:2)**. Once the door to the wedding was shut, the slothful virgins were never allowed in. This does not mean they were shut out of heaven or eternal life with Jesus, although we will see some other parables where this is the case, but here we see the foolish virgins shut out of the wedding feast. The wedding feast is a select event in which only the body of Christ can attend. The free-gift of justification gives us entrance into heaven, and eternal life with Jesus, but there is so much more Jesus has to offer us. Don't get me wrong, heaven will be great, and eternal life with Jesus even better, but if Jesus has something even more, and if it will give Him pleasure, and in turn give me unending joy, then I want everything God has to offer me. The wedding feast, also known as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, is a reward of inheritance given to the faithful. **"Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revelation 19:9).**

The rapture, or as Paul says it, "the resurrection of the dead", is the starting point to our rewards of inheritance. During the seven-year period, starting sometime after the rapture, also known as the seventieth week of Daniel, or the Tribulation, there will be people who are not caught up to heaven, but are martyred for the Name of Jesus, (**Rev 6:9-II**, 7:9-I7, I4:I-5, 20:4). These are those people who become Christians during the Tribulation, or they were Christians who finally woke up and decided

Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead

Jesus was worth dying for. These martyrs will also participate in the rewards of the faithful. But anyone else not taken from the earth, either alive or raised from the ground during this final week of years before Jesus returns at His second coming, will miss the rewards of inheritance. They may not miss eternal life with Jesus, but they will not be one with Him as a part of His body, the Holy Temple of God. We will discuss this in much greater detail at the appropriate time in the next volume of this series, but as you can see, there is an urgency to Paul's writings not to miss out or be disqualified from the wonderful things God has planned for us. It is God's will, and therefore Paul's intention, to make sure we all participate in the resurrection of the dead and the rewards of inheritance as a result.

| know these things | have said are very controversial, but | am not saying them to bring condemnation on anyone. My intention is to bring the body of Christ into the Knowledge of the Truth. There are too many places in the New Testament, many of which | have shared with you, to ignore. We must take heed to Paul's urgency. We must pay attention to the words of Jesus and not be naïve or ignorant to His sayings. Like | said earlier, Jesus is coming back and He expects results. He expects us to have done something good with this free-gift of righteousness He has given us. He wants to see a return on His investment. He wants us participating in His plan of redemption and building of the body of Christ. Do not be offended by these words. | am not trying to offend, but through love, awaken the body of Christ from our disillusions and ignorance of an "at-homeness" in the world. Jesus wants our full attention. He wants us awake and alert, always seeking Him and working for Him. There is no reward for the lazy. The one who does not run the race will not receive the prize. Only those who win will receive the crown. Therefore, let us press on to maturity. Let us run the race well and give ourselves to Him, because He gave Himself to us.

These are Paul's words and it shows his love and concern for the body of Christ. He wants us all to be partakers of the divine calling. His actions are a living example of his admonition to the Philippians. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." Philippians 2:3



Concerning Christian Dersecution



atthew 5:10–12-¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ¹¹ God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and

say all sorts of evil things against you because you are My followers. ¹² <u>Rejoice and be glad! For great is your reward in heaven</u>.

There are four categories that must be defined when discussing tribulation and persecution. Many Christians confuse these four topics, lumping them together, thinking God is doing all this to them to teach them something. This is incorrect, and we must educate ourselves from the deception of the enemy.

- > Suffering tribulation and persecution for the Word's sake
- Enduring sickness, disease, and calamity
- > Temptations, consequences for sin, and spiritual warfare
- Discipline and training from God

 $\ensuremath{\mathbb{E}}$ ach one of these topics is caused by, and results from different circumstances.

Suffering tribulation and persecution for the Word's sake

Christians suffering tribulation and persecution for the sake of the Word of God and the Name of Jesus results simply in the fact that the sinful nature loves the darkness and hates the light. Thus, the sinful nature of the world will do anything to destroy and kill Christians. This is why there are great rewards for those who endure through this. Those who suffer persecution for Jesus have made the decision to walk in the Light. They have chosen to let their light shine for Jesus and show the worth of our Lord. Even though this life will result in persecution, it honors the

Concerning Christian Persecution

Father, and He is pleased, because through our perseverance, many are hearing the Word of God and being brought into God's family. If there were no one willing to stand for Jesus, then no one would hear the goodness of God and none would be saved. "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). God needs us on this earth proclaiming the good news of Jesus. Therefore, great is the reward for those who speak His Word.

Suffering and enduring persecution for Jesus is a Christian principle. To pursue and strive for Jesus will result in our persecution. "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12). This is an area of Christianity, especially in America, where the concept of a Christian life has differed from the Bible. Normally, to be a Christian, means you will suffer persecution. People will hate you and want to kill you. But today, America has created an unhealthy view of Christianity. It has unknowingly digressed from the focus of Jesus as our treasure and has been twisted into seeking this temporal world for its happiness and joy. American Christians have become too comfortable in the world. Too many of us do not consider ourselves as ambassadors for Christ, aliens to the world. "Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls." (I Peter 2:11). The world is not our home. Our home is in Christ, not of this world, "Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. ... My Kingdom is **not of** this world." (John 18:36). Christians today, especially in America, have developed an "at home sense" of living in this corporeal world. Our thinking must be changed and renewed to the mind of Christ. We are here on this earth to fulfill the plan of God. We should be ambassadors for Jesus, with our primary objective on building the body of Christ. It should not be how comfortable we can make our life here in this world.

Being a Christian means to be like Christ, not like the world. Mankind, in its natural, unregenerate state, has a corrupted and sinful nature. "For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, for it is not even able to do so. Those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God." (Romans 8:7-8). As Christians, when we let our light shine and show the worth of Jesus, we are going against the grain of society. The world loves sin. It loves the darkness and hates the light, (Jn)3:20), so when we let our light shine, the world hates us. The world wants to persecute and kill us. In Romans, Paul explains the mystery of God, kept hidden before the foundation of the world. That we, as Christians, are heirs of God, children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:16-18). This is probably one of the biggest "if" statements in the Bible. The "if" isn't concerning our justification. We won't go to hell for not suffering for Him, but it is concerning our glorification. Our inheritance is based on how we live this life. Did you live your life for Him, against the grain of the sinful world? Or did you float along with the tide of life, being tossed to and fro by waves, every wind of doctrine, and the trickery of men, (Eph 4:14). Suffering in this world is a fact of Christian living and this is exactly what is wrong with American Christian doctrine today. As Christians, we must expect to be reviled and persecuted for taking a stand for Jesus, for going against the grain of life and walking that righteous, narrow path. But something we must realize, just because we suffer, doesn't mean our lives are deprived of joy. In fact, it is quite the opposite. "We rejoice in our sufferings ... " (Romans 5:3). There is a supernatural joy which comes upon the Christian who endures persecution. Peter and John experienced this when they were arrested for preaching the name of Jesus. "And when they had called for the

apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, <u>rejoicing that they</u> <u>were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name</u>." (Acts 5:40-41).

Suffering for the Name and enduring persecution is a Christian principle. Jesus tells us, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. <u>In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world</u>." (John 16:33). Jesus tells us we will have tribulation in this world, but He gives us comfort knowing we can be overcomers in Him. This doesn't mean we won't have to endure persecution, it means in persecution we will overcome. And sometimes this endurance leads to the death of our physical bodies, but this is still not defeat because Jesus defeated death; so that in Him, even in death, we gain life. "And they overcame him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and <u>they loved not their lives unto the death</u>." (Revelation 12:11).

"... and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. <u>Yet not a hair of your head</u> <u>will perish</u>. "By your endurance <u>you will gain your lives</u>." (Luke 21:16-19).

This is where the joy of the Lord comes from. "... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." (Hebrews 10:34).

Persecution and tribulation only comes because of one thing: the world loves the darkness and hates the light. We are persecuted for the Name of Jesus only. "... tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake." (Mark 4:17).

God is not the one persecuting us and giving us tribulation. It is not even God "allowing" it to happen. This is just as bad as Him doing it Himself. For example, I would never break my kid's arm to teach him a lesson, this is child abuse. And in the same way, I would never allow

Concerning Christian Persecution

someone else to break my kid's arm either. This is what people are suggesting when they say God "allowed" the devil to do something bad to me. God forbid. God is not a child abuser, and will not give permission to anyone to abuse His children. So then why are Christians being persecuted? Because of the fallen world in which we live. God will not, and because of the laws of free will in which He established, God cannot stop sinful men from their decisions of evil, (Rom 6:12-16, 7:14-25, Gal 6:7-8). People might ask, "I thought God was sovereign and can do anything He wants?" God is sovereign, and in His sovereignty, He has given man free will to choose life or death. He will not persuade someone against their will. God will not force someone to change. He has given them the right to free will, even if it is to do those things which are not proper or right, (Rom 1:28-32). Therefore, because He has given man the right to choose, He cannot stop sinful men from their decisions of evil. But He has given those who believe and trust in Him a way to endure the evil in this world, and He has made the effects of the persecution temporal. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," (2 Corinthians 4:17).

-->· <->

Enduring sickness, disease, and calamity

Sickness, disease, and worldly calamity are a result of the original sin in this fallen world. When sin entered this world, death entered through sin, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12). Sickness, disease, death, and worldly calamity (such as natural disasters, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, floods, etc..) are all effects of original sin in this fallen world.

Romans 8:20-23-²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse (the consequence of original sin). But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious <u>freedom from death and decay</u>. ²² For we know that <u>all creation has been groaning as in the</u> <u>pains of childbirth</u> right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for <u>we long for our</u> <u>bodies to be released from sin and suffering</u>. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, <u>including the new bodies he has</u> <u>promised us</u>.

Since the original sin, and death through sin, the creation, including us, have been eagerly waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. But our physical bodies and this creation have not yet been redeemed. This is the promise, the hope of eternal life with Him. We have been given the Holy Spirit as a down payment, a pledge to our future glory in Him, ^{Ephesians 1:13-14} "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory," ²Corinthians 1:22</sup> "who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."

Therefore, the physical creation still waits for its redemption, the recreation of our physical bodies and this corporeal world. Just as our spirit was made new when we were justified, our physical bodies and this creation will be made a new creation without the corrupting effects of sin.^{2 Peter 3:13} "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." ^{Revelation 21:11} "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away." Sickness, disease, and calamity are results of the corrupting effects of original sin. These are not consequences of our daily, personal sins. There are many Christians who believe if something bad is happening in your life, then it must be the result of sin. The truth is, we all have sin in our life. Our new spirit is perfect, spotless, and sinless, covered by the blood of Jesus to never again be tainted with sin, but we battle sin in our soul every day. But this is not why we have sickness in our life. Sickness is a result of the original sin in the world, not the personal sin attacking your soul. Because of original sin, we live in a fallen world, corrupted and reprobate. The seed of man was, and still is, corrupted by sin. Therefore, Jesus had to be born from the seed of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason some people are born with disease or ailment. It is not the consequence of the mother or father's sin that made the child sick or gave them this condition, and it certainly isn't God who makes people sick. God is our source to the solution, not the problem.

John 9:1-3-¹ As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

God didn't make this man blind just to heal him, but God used this opportunity to show His glory. This healing, among many others, is a foreshadowing of God's grace. The physical healing gave this man eyes to see, and released him from the bondage of corruption. This is a foreshadowing of the effects of the healing power of Jesus in our souls. The power of grace has made us alive with Him and freed us from the bondage of corruption, allowing us to freely choose and worship God.

Therefore, the corruption of original sin came as a result of Adam's free-will and choice. God takes the responsibility of this calamity because He gave man the free will that resulted in this fallen state. "The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these." (Isaiah 45:7).

Concerning Christian Persecution

God knew if He gave Adam free will, it would result in sin. He didn't create sin, but sin came as a result of Adam's decision to disobey God. Every one of us disobeys God as Adam did, **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23)**, but our sin was not a surprise to God. He knew Adam, and everyone else with free will, would sin. Therefore, because God gave us free will, He also gave us a Savior. God made a Way when there was no other way. He gave us Jesus to redeem us from the destruction of sin and give us life in Him. This was not a reactionary measure to sin, but instead, an orchestration of His beautiful plan of redemption.

Jesus has redeemed us from destruction, "Bless the Lord Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;" (Psalm 103:4). We have been redeemed from the pit of hell and eternal damnation. The death of our physical body is not destruction. To die as a Christian is not defeat, but victory in Christ, for to depart and be with Christ is much better, (Phil 1:23), for to die is not to perish, but to be with Jesus forever, (Lk 21:16-19).

So, if there is sickness, or disease, or effects of the corruption of this fallen world in your life, be of good cheer, for Jesus has overcome the world! Don't let this get you down, trust in Him. Hope in your future with Him forever, and the joy of the Lord will overcome and overtake you. Our joy is made full when we completely trust, hope, and rely in Him.

Psalm 16:11- You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

We can have peace and joy in this corrupted world because we know our joy is made full in Him, and we will have everlasting pleasure with Him.

Temptations, consequences for sin, and spiritual warfare

Now we must discuss the things which are indeed a result of our personal decisions. This topic refers back to the previous discussion of original sin. It is a fact, original sin resulted in the calamity of all creation. We also know God is not making these things happen in our life, but they are a result of the original sin which corrupted creation. They are effects of living in this fallen world in which we must endure with joy in Him.

The answer to this, as discussed above, is to persevere, endure and trust in Him, knowing our redemption grows closer every day. But there is a consequence to giving into this sin and letting it rule your life. God has made a way, namely Jesus, to free us from the bondage of sin, but if a person is living in the ways of the world, even if they are a Christian, they are still in bondage to sin, and therefore, will suffer the consequences to living in sin. This is not God's doing; in fact, He is trying desperately to free us from this bondage and bring us into His Light. But if we choose to dwell in the world instead of abiding in Him, it will result in a hard life. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). If we don't take His advice and come to Him and connect with Him, if we don't learn from Him through His Word, we will remain weary and heavy-laden. Many people blame God for hard times, but in truth He has given us everything we need to be an overcomer. This does not mean there won't be hard times ahead. Life may get even more difficult after one becomes a Christian, but that is only if you stay living for the world. If you abandon your old life, lay aside the old self, crucify the flesh and live for Jesus, your joy will be made so full that when hard times show up, namely, persecution, tribulation, sickness, and calamity, Jesus will be your refuge and you will be so satisfied in Him that "He will make known the path of life; in His presence, you will experience the fullness of joy and pleasures forever." (Psalm 16:11).

Again, He has given us our free will to choose Him. He will never force Himself on us. We must choose the One who first chose us, (Jn 15:16, Eph 1:4). But if we choose to abide in the world instead of abiding in Him, there will be consequences. These consequences are not the list we discussed above. Persecution, tribulation, sickness, and calamity are not a result or judgment for our personal sins, but the effect of the original sin and the corruption on all creation. The consequences for living as the world does are not God's punishment, but a result from natural and spiritual laws. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Galatians 6:7-8).

There will be a judgement in the future for sin. This is the wrath of God poured out in what is commonly known as the Tribulation. Paul urges us to be sober and on the alert so that we might be able to escape this wrath. "Let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has <u>not destined us for wrath</u>, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (I Thessalonians 5:8-9). But this wrath is for an appointed time, in the future, forewarned to us in advance, not meant for those who abide in Jesus. He has not destined us for wrath.

The consequences for sin, in this age, are a result of our own choices. If a man sows to his flesh, meaning he lives and abides to feed the cravings of the sinful nature; never giving caution or attention to evil, but letting sin reign in his soul, that man, even though he may be a Christian, has made himself a slave to sin, and this choice of living will result in a hard life and eventually death. It is not God doing this to him, but a result of his decisions to let sin reign in his life. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But <u>each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by</u> <u>his own lust</u>. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to

Concerning Christian Persecution

sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (James 1:13–15).

The birth of sin, or the manifestation of sin in our life is not a condemning judgment from God. All sin has been judged through Jesus on the cross. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1). The chastisement or the punishment for sin was laid on Jesus at the cross, (Is 53:5). Even when we sin as a Christian, the effects and punishment for sin never alter or affect our perfect spirit, covered by the blood of Jesus. "So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you." (Isaiah 54:9). So, what does James mean by "the birth of sin"? This is the effect of sin on the soul, and the manifestation in this physical realm as a result of personal sin. As I discussed in the previous section, sickness, disease, and calamity are not a result of personal sin, but effects of the original sin and the corruption of the fallen world. However, there are diseases and ailments that a person can bring on themselves by operating in the flesh. The disease exists in the world because of the corrupted effects of original sin, and if a person is carried away and enticed by his own lust, there can be physical effects that develop consequently. Not a consequence from God, but a result of physical laws on this earth. As in the case of sexual diseases. These sexual diseases will kill the physical body, but never effect the newly created spirit, but because of the choices an individual makes in this world, he may have to live with a physical consequence from that decision. The effect of this sin will not hurt the new spirit because it is covered by the blood of Jesus, but this consequence can lead to the death of the physical body.

The same can be applied to someone who breaks the law and is placed in jail. If he is a Christian, but allows himself to make wrong decisions, resulting in his incarceration, this is a physical consequence he must live with. Again, the sin that put him in prison does not affect his spirit, but it does alter his physical life. Another example is the use of drugs and alcohol. If someone is enticed to use drugs or gets excessively drunk on a consistent basis, he is not living for God, and the lust of the flesh is ruling

Concerning Christian Persecution

his life. There can be devastatingly bad physical effects of the drugs and alcohol on the body, when, even if this person is a Christian, it is the consequences of his choices resulting in physical problems. Again, the offence does not taint the Christian spirit, but obviously this is a person not focused on God. If he is a Christian, and his spirit has been made new and covered by the blood of Jesus, even though he is not living for God and is not abiding in His plan, this person will not burn in the lake of fire, but, if he doesn't change, he will not have many, if not any, eternal rewards.

Another example of a sin causing sickness is stress. Stress is a sin if it is worrying about the cares of this world. "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, but <u>the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the</u> <u>desires for other things entering in choke the word</u>, and it becomes unfruitful." (Mark 4:18-19).

The stress of life can overwhelm and overtake the person who is not trusting in God. Life is full of difficulties. This will never change, but how we handle these situations is everything. And what we choose to allow into our life, and the motivation for those decisions makes a big difference. For instance, work can be a major culprit when it comes to sinful stress. The Bible says, "If you don't work, you don't eat", (2Thes 3:10). Work done correctly is a healthy principle of life. Paul said this to the Thessalonians because there were people not working, and they became busybodies, leading an undisciplined life, (2Thes 3:11). But let us use Paul as an example of how to work correctly without letting the cares of this world corrupt our soul, and rob us of the goodness of the Word. The motivation Paul had to work was not to make a lot of money so he could have comfortable life. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Love was his motivation. He said, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example." (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). Paul worked so that he would not be a burden to the Thessalonians. This is an outstanding example of Paul's character and love for people. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul specifically says, pastors, and those who teach, have the right not to work, but to let the congregation pay their wage. But here at Thessalonica, Paul is not using this right, purposely, so he would not be a burden to them and that he might be an example to them as well. All of us must work. It is a principle of life, but our motivation to work is what makes all the difference. If love is your motivation, sinful stress will not be present, but when you take on the cares of this world by worrying and unbelief, stress will cause an unhealthy life, resulting in sickness and poor health.

God has given us free choice, and he will not force Himself on us. He will let us willingly choose sickness and death. It grieves Him when we do this, (Eph 4:30), but God will not force His will on us. For those of us who ask the Holy Spirit to guide them into all Truth, He will convict them of sin, but if this person is constantly ignoring God's advice and guidance, there will come a point when God can give them over to their reprobate and depraved mind. He will let them go to their own choices and desires, even if this means death and destruction to our physical bodies, (Rom 1:28, Eph 4:19). But let us not choose this path. Choose life, choose God, so that you may live, (Deut 30:19).

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest." (Hebrews 4:11). Let God be your peace, come to Jesus, and He will give you rest, (2Thes 3:11). Let Jesus be your motivation in love, ^{Colossians} 3:23 "Whatever you do, <u>do your work heartily, as for the Lord</u> rather than for men," ^{1 Peter 5:7} "<u>casting all your anxiety on Him</u>, because He cares for you."

Do not ever think God is the one causing sickness and disease to bring a person closer to Him. Nonsense, just as James says, let us read it again because this is so important to understand. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But <u>each one is tempted when he is carried away and</u>

Concerning Christian Persecution

<u>enticed by his own lust</u>. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (James 1:13-15).

God is not the one causing bad things to happen. He is the One who will get you through the bad times. He will co-operate with those who love Him. Those who realize they made a mistake, can repent, and even though they are living with a physical consequence for sin, there is no condemnation. God does not want you running away from Him. He wants you running to Him, and putting your trust in Him. His goodness will cooperate with those who love Him.

Sanctify the soul from the ways of the world by receiving the Word of God. Choose to lay aside the filthiness of the world and embrace His Word. "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So, <u>choose life in order that you may live</u>, you and your descendants, by <u>loving</u> the LORD your God, by <u>obeying</u> His voice, and by <u>holding fast</u> to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

"Therefore, <u>putting aside</u> all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility <u>receive the word</u> implanted, which is able to save your souls. But <u>prove yourselves</u> doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." (James 1:21-22).

"But I say, <u>walk by the Spirit</u>, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16).

God has always given us a choice to make Him our priority. It pleases Him when we freely make the decision to choose Him above all else. And in return, we receive the fullest joy and the most happiness when we are freely serving Him.

Spiritual Warfare

We live in a fallen world with the effects and corruption of sin all around us. Our sinful nature is always at war with our spirit, battling for the control of our soul and ultimately our life, (Rom 7:14-25). This battle can only be won by the Spirit-illuminated Word of God, (Galatians 5:16). The Word of God is referred to as the Sword of the Spirit. The only weapon of offense in the list of the armor of God, (Eph 6:10-20). We not only have to battle against the sinful nature, but what makes it worse is there is a devil scheming against us, trying to persuade and tempt the sinful nature to rule the soul.

This topic, just like everything, must be balanced and understood thru the Word of God. Satan has been defeated. Jesus is alive, He defeated death and has the keys to death and hell, (**Rev 1:17-18**). But Satan is still on this earth with his many demons and fallen angels serving him. Satan has no power other than what we give him. He has no control over your sinful nature unless you give yourself over to the temptations and desires of the flesh. It is then, and only then, he can have a grasp on your life and destroy it. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10). The armor of God is given to us to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to <u>stand firm</u> against the schemes of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10-11).

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that <u>you will be able to resist in the evil day</u>, and having done everything <u>to stand firm, stand.</u>" (Ephesians 6:12–13).

Because we live in this fallen world, sin is all around us. But it is not God's will to take us out of the world, but instead He wants us here in the world as His ambassadors, building the body of Christ. Therefore, He

has equipped us and will protect us from the evil one. "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." (John 17:15).

One thing we must understand, the devil is already defeated. Therefore, it is not our responsibility to defeat the devil in spiritual combat, but instead, knowing he is already defeated, take a stand against him by humbling and submitting yourself to God. Satan cannot touch you when you are abiding in God. "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." <u>Submit therefore to God. Resist</u> <u>the devil and he will flee from you</u>. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:6-8).

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It is not meant to "kill" the devil, but to separate you from the sinful nature. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). The Word of God will cut off the sinful nature, hindering it from persuading the soul to its evil desires. This is resisting the flesh, standing firm in the grace of God. We must use the Word to separate us from evil just as Jesus did in the wilderness. Satan tried to tempt Him three times, and all three times Jesus resisted with the Word of God, (Matt 4:1-11).

Satan is defeated and cannot force us to do anything. He may persuade us to fall into sin, but that is by our choice. He can never force us against our will to serve him. This is why Peter tells us, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, <u>seeking someone to devour</u>. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." (I Peter 5:8-9). Satan is prowling and seeking those who will not resist him. So, stand firm in the Word and if he comes to devour you, don't let him. Stand fast in the Word of God, don't succumb to the lusts of the flesh, but choose life and the righteousness of God.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, (Eph 6:10-17), has an assailing use as well. Jesus commissioned all believers to preach the gospel to the world, (Matt 28:19-20, Mk 16:15). This is using the Word of God as an offensive weapon. Jesus has overcome the evil one. The only power Satan has is deception. It is our responsibility as Christians to preach the good news to the world; shining the Light on the darkness, and proclaiming the name of Jesus.

<->·<->

Discipline and training from God

This last topic is not Christian persecution, but I chose to discuss this because so many Christians think persecution and tribulation is God's way of training and disciplining us. God is love, not a child abuser. He does not hurt us to teach us a lesson, nor, does He "allow" the devil to hurt us for our training. Many Christians use Job as an example of God's use of the devil to train, but the book of Job is misunderstood. God didn't allow the devil to tempt Job. Job had already yielded to fear, giving Satan the authorization to come into his life and steel, kill and destroy. "For the **thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." (Job 3:25).**

God did not allow Satan to hurt Job, God merely told Satan, "he is already in your power." (Job 1:12). The only thing He forbade of the devil was he couldn't take his life. God had a covenant with Job that prevented him from being killed. Otherwise, Satan had control over Job because Job had already yielded to him.

The three topics listed above: 1) Christian persecution and suffering for Christ's sake; 2) enduring sickness, disease, and worldly calamity; and 3) temptations and consequences of sin are not the training and discipline of God. God will only use His Word and the Holy Spirit to train and

develop. He will not beat us up and abuse us, nor will He allow or send the devil to train and discipline us. God is love and He will train and discipline with love. Does this mean God is a push over? No, God says what He means and means what He says; for He is merciful and full of grace. But does this mean God is bending the rules for us? No, God cannot function outside of the laws He established. He is a just God, and therefore, there must be a punishment for sin. This punishment should have fallen on us, but God's mercy endures. God loves us so much He sent His son to be the sacrifice for sin. The punishment for sin could not be left unresolved. So, instead of punishing us, God sent His Son, Jesus, to bear the punishment for our sins. He took our place and paid the price for our sin. "Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, <u>smitten by God</u>, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Isaiah 53:10 "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." ¹ Thessalonians 5:9 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for <u>obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus</u> <u>Christ</u>."

Jesus bore the judgement of all our sins on Himself. The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus, and He paid the price for our transgressions and iniquity. The chastisement for our sins was now laid on Jesus so we might have everlasting peace through Him.

Because Jesus accepted the wrath of God for our sins and bore them for us, we now have confidence knowing our sins are forgiven. God wants the best for us and He will train and discipline those whom He loves, but we must define what it means to discipline. The Greek word for discipline is $\pi \alpha l \delta \epsilon i \alpha$, **paideia**. This word is used six times in the New Testament all by Paul, four of which are used in Hebrews chapter 12 alone. All six times this word refers to training and instruction rather than chastisement and persecution, **(Heb 12:5, 7, 8, 11, Eph 6:4, 2Tim 3:16)**.

Hebrews 12:1-7- 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE **DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD**, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; ⁶ FOR **THOSE WHOM THE LORD** LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not **discipline**?

The process of discipline and training is the sanctification process.

In Hebrews 12:1, we are told to lay aside sin and run with endurance against persecution, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. To lay aside sin is the same as setting yourself apart from the world. We cannot sanctify ourselves. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are set apart from sin. God, as our Father, trains us and brings us up in His Word, so we can endure the tribulations and persecutions of this life. Colossians 1:9-12- For this reason also, since the day we heard of *it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be <u>filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual</u> <u>wisdom and understanding</u>, ¹⁰ so that you will <u>walk in a</u> <u>manner worthy of the Lord</u>, to please *Him* in all respects, <u>bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the</u> <u>knowledge of God</u>; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness

and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

All these great things Paul lists is our training and discipline:

- > Filled with the knowledge of His will
- > Having spiritual wisdom and understanding
- > Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord
- Bearing fruit in every good work
- ▶ Increasing in the knowledge of God
- > Strengthened with all power

There is a big difference between training and discipline vs. the punishment and consequences for sin. Training and discipline is done thru the love of the Father. He is preparing us to handle the tribulations and persecutions of the world.

Punishment for sin is entirely different. This is the wrath of God. The anger of the Lord against the corruption and despicable acts of sin. Hebrews 12:1-7 is not addressing this wrath. This text in Hebrews is the process of sanctification to prepare us for the world. As Christians, those of us who believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead for our justification, we are comforted to know Jesus bore the wrath of God for our sins on Himself. God's wrath was poured out on Jesus, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and the judgment and wrath of God pertaining to sin was placed on our Savior for our sake, (Is 53:4-6).

There is one statement in Hebrews 12:6 which leads Christians to believe God is punishing us by hurting and abusing His children. I want to address this specifically so there is no confusion. Paul is quoting Proverbs 3:11-12 from the Septuagint translation. I want to focus on verse 12 in Proverbs 3, which is verse 6 in Hebrews 12:

Hebrews 12:6- For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And <u>He scourges every son</u> whom He receives.

Many questions have arisen in the words, "He scourges every son whom He receives." The word scourge is the same word used when Jesus was whipped and beaten.] absolutely do not believe God will whip us and beat us to bring us closer to Him. The whole context of these verses in Hebrews 12 is about training, correction, and discipline, not scourging and beating. Paul is quoting the Septuagint version of Proverbs 3:12 which uses the word scourge- $\mu\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\gamma\delta\omega$, mastigoo. But] find it interesting that the Masoretic text of Proverbs 3:12 does not even have the word scourge. "For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father _____ the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:12 NKJV).

The NASB version reads it similar but includes the word "corrects", but there really should not even be a word there at all. But Paul is not quoting the Masoretic text. He, or more importantly the Holy Spirit, is undoubtedly quoting the Septuagint, which we cannot ignore, but I believe this word scourge does not imply the same beating that Jesus endured. At least not for us. Jesus was scourged so we would not have to be. He took our place in the sufferings for our sin. So, we can look at verse 6 a couple of ways:

The first way, based on the context of this scripture, is to view the punishment as non-punitive. Not relating to physical punishment, but to correction and discipline, as the Masoretic text implies. If the term scourge is indeed directed to us, then I believe it to be rendered correction or discipline based on the surrounding text.

The other way is this. If we look closely at the statement "He scourges every son", we find the Greek words, scourges ($\mu\alpha\sigma\tau\tau\gamma\delta\omega$, mastigoo) and every ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$, pas), are both in the singular form. Which means Scripture is only addressing one person. I believe this one person may be Jesus. "But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief;" (Isaiah 53:10). This is very agreeable to the surrounding text and the rest of the Bible. The singular tense of the text is similar to Paul's discussion on the Promise in Galatians 3. The Promise

of inheritance is not promised to the descendants of Abraham, as plural, but it is singular, only addressing one person, our Savior, Jesus Christ, (Gal 3:16). | believe this text in Hebrews 12:6 may be similar. The scourging referred to in verse 6 is only directed toward Jesus, singular, and not us.

We have established from the above discussion that God does not abuse and hurt us to teach us a lesson. Nor does He use or allow the devil to train us. That just doesn't make good sense. I am a father of three children, and if I knew of a child abuser or someone who wanted to kill my kids, would I use this killer to train and discipline them? Of course not! I would do everything in my power to protect them from him. Even though this sounds foolish, unfortunately, this is how many Christians view the disciplinary actions of our Father.

There has been a misunderstanding of Scripture around this topic of Godly training and discipline. God does in fact train, discipline, and correct, but we must understand His method according to the Bible.

We read verses like the following without an understanding of the goodness and love of our Father. People immediately associate these verses to persecution, tribulation, sickness, disease, and calamity.

Psalm 94:12- Blessed is the man whom You chasten

Proverbs 3:11–12-¹¹ My son, do not reject the <u>discipline of the</u> <u>LORD</u> or loathe <u>His reproof</u>, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He <u>reproves</u>.

Deuteronomy 8:5- Thus you are to know in your heart that the <u>LORD your God was disciplining</u> you just as a man disciplines his son.

1 Corinthians 11:32- But when we are judged, we are <u>disciplined</u> <u>by the Lord.</u>

Revelation 3:19- Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

But God is a good God in which "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17). God does not use bad things to correct, discipline and train, but instead He uses His Spirit-illuminated Word to instruct and give us wisdom. If you go back to the verses above and read around the text, you will find none of them say "God disciplines by hurting us". They all portray an element of discipline and training through instruction and His Word. Let us review these same verses again, but include the surrounding text.

Psalm 94:12- Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and whom <u>You teach out of Your law</u>. The teaching of the Word is the chastening.

Proverbs 3:11-12-¹¹ My son, do not reject the <u>discipline of the</u> <u>LORD</u> or loathe <u>His reproof</u>, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He <u>reproves</u>. But now let us read the verses before this to find out how the Lord reproves.

Proverbs 3:1-6- "My son, do not forget my <u>teaching</u>, But let your heart <u>keep my commandments</u>; For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. <u>Trust in the</u> <u>LORD</u> with all your heart and <u>do not lean on your own</u> <u>understanding</u>. In all your ways <u>acknowledge Him, and He</u> <u>will direct your path</u>." Again, we see His reproof and discipline is teaching us His Word and humbling ourselves to Him, trusting Him in everything we do. There is not one sense of God beating us up for our training in this text.

Deuteronomy 8:5- "Thus you are to know in your heart that the <u>LORD your God was disciplining</u> you just as a man disciplines his son. God starts this verse with the word thus, so we must read before this and find out what "thus" is referring to. Deuteronomy 8:1-4- "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing (training or proving) you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. "Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years." God is teaching his people to trust in Him. He wants us to humble ourselves to Him, proving that He will take care of us. He fed the children of Israel with supernatural food from heaven. Teaching them to trust in Him and His Word and ultimately teaching us that Jesus is the bread of Life and those who come to Him will never hunger or thirst, (Jn 6:32-35).

I Corinthians II:32- But when we are judged, we are <u>disciplined</u> by the Lord. If we read into this text we will find more words of instruction. Paul is teaching the people of Corinth how to conduct themselves concerning the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians lost site of the importance and reverence of the body and blood of Jesus. They were using this sacred ceremony as their meal, not holding the communion in reverence. They were debasing the work of Jesus on the cross. They had to be reproved and corrected. Paul didn't hurt them to teach them about the Lord's Supper, but instead instructed them in the ways of the Lord, teaching them that if they eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, they are drinking judgment to himself. He explains to them, because they do not reverence the cross of Christ in an appropriate manner, they have opened the door to sickness and death. The training and discipline of the Lord is not the sickness and death, but the physical consequence of living in sin. Instead, God sent Paul to correct them and train them so they can change their foolish ways and live a healthy life apart from evil.

Revelation 3:19- 'Those whom I love, I <u>reprove and discipline</u>. Let us continue reading... "therefore be zealous and repent. 'Behold, <u>I stand at the door and knock</u>; if anyone <u>hears My</u> <u>voice</u> and <u>opens the door</u>, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 'He who <u>overcomes</u>, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. '<u>He who has an</u> <u>ear, let him hear</u> what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 3:19-22). The reproof and discipline is merely allowing Jesus into our life. It is the goodness of God which leads to repentance, (Rom 2:4). The reproof is to allow Jesus into your life, hear what He has to say, and become an overcomer. Jesus is standing at the door knocking, waiting for us to let Him in. He is not busting the door down and beating us over the head till we repent.

We are trained and disciplined by His Word. The Greek word for discipline, $\pi \alpha i \delta \epsilon i \alpha$, paideia, in Hebrews 12:7, is the same word for training, used in 2 Tim 3:16. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for <u>training</u> in righteousness;"

This verse sums it up. The Word of God is the means of teaching, reproof, correction, and training. Those reproved and corrected by God gain understanding and wisdom. "He whose ear listens to the <u>life-</u> giving reproof will dwell among the wise. He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who <u>listens to reproof</u> acquires understanding. The fear of the LORD is the <u>instruction for wisdom</u>, and before honor comes humility." (Proverbs 15:31-33).

Proverbs 4:1-2-¹ <u>Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father</u>, and give attention that you may <u>gain understanding</u>, ² For I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction.

Proverbs 4:20-27-²⁰ My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. ²² For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. ²³ Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it *flow* the springs of life. ²⁴ Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you. ²⁵ Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. ²⁶ Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. ²⁷ Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.

Proverbs 15:5- A fool rejects his father's discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible.

Psalm 119:73-80- 73 Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments. ⁷⁴ May those who fear You see me and be glad, because I wait for Your word. 75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have humbled me. (most translations use the word "afflicted" here, which gives the sense of God inflicting sickness or calamity. But if you study this word, especially in the Greek the Septuagint, it means to humble. This fits perfectly in line with the surrounding text and God's method of training and discipline we have learned from the previous scriptures on this topic.) ⁷⁶ O may Your lovingkindness comfort me, according to Your word to Your servant. 77 May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight. ⁷⁸ May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie; but I shall meditate on Your precepts. ⁷⁹ May those who fear You turn to me, even those who know Your testimonies.⁸⁰ May my heart be blameless in Your statutes, so that I will not be ashamed.

The author of Psalm 119 is unknown, although most scholars agree it was written by either David or Ezra. This chapter focuses on the goodness of God and His Word. The constant topic of the entire chapter concentrates on the training and discipline of the Father through

the of humbling ourselves to His life-giving Word. Below are some examples from Psalm 119.

"<u>Your word I have treasured in my heart</u>, That I may not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11).

"I shall <u>delight</u> in Your statutes; I <u>shall not forget Your</u> word." (Psalm 119:16).

"<u>Open my eyes</u>, that I <u>may behold</u> Wonderful things from Your law." (Psalm 119:18).

"My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me <u>according to</u> <u>Your word</u>." (Psalm 119:28).

"Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I <u>delight</u> in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways. <u>Establish Your word</u> to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You." (Psalm 119:35–38).

"I shall <u>delight</u> in Your commandments, Which I love." (Psalm 119:47).

"This is my comfort in my affliction, That <u>Your word has</u> <u>revived me</u>." (Psalm 119:50). Not affliction from God, but the persecution and affliction for the Word's sake. It was the Word that revived him to endure the afflictions.

"<u>Teach me</u> good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments." (Psalm 119:66).

"Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me <u>understanding</u>, that I may <u>learn</u> Your commandments." (Psalm 119:73).

"May Your compassion come to me that I may live, for Your law is my <u>delight</u>." (Psalm 119:77).

"Your <u>word is a lamp</u> to my feet and a <u>light</u> to my path." (Psalm 119:105). "Deal with Your servant according to Your lovingkindness, and <u>teach me</u> Your statutes. I am Your servant; give me <u>understanding</u>, that I may <u>know</u> Your testimonies." (Psalm 119:124-125).

"Therefore, I <u>love Your commandments</u> above gold, yes, above fine gold." (Psalm 119:127).

"The unfolding of Your words gives <u>light</u>; it gives <u>understanding</u> to the simple." (Psalm 119:130).

"<u>Establish</u> my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me." (Psalm 119:133).

"Trouble and anguish have come upon me, yet Your commandments are my <u>delight</u>." (Psalm 119:143).

"Those who <u>love</u> Your law have <u>great peace</u>, and nothing causes them to stumble." (Psalm 119:165).

"Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me <u>understanding</u> according to Your word." (Psalm 119:169).

Training and discipline is an act of the love of the Father, and it is based on our relationship and maturity with Him whether we will embrace His training or fight against it. Immature Christians, still living in the flesh, will fight this training. The flesh hates it. Even though your spirit is made perfect and is without sin, the soul must be renewed and trained in the things of God. This can be a very unpleasant experience at the beginning, but as you learn and grow in the things of God, you will naturally start to choose Him. Your decisions in life will start to reflect Him instead of the world, and instead of the training feeling like discipline, it becomes an enjoyment. Just like a weight lifter, in the beginning, training can be unbearable; it hurts, your body is not used to any of the movements, your body is screaming for relief. But after your body has been trained, you find your body needs and yearns for the training. It can't function without it. A conditioned weight lifter has finally achieved the point where it is desirable to train, and his body yearns for it. Hebrews 12:11-14- All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but

sorrowful; <u>yet to those who have been trained by it</u>, <u>afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness</u>. ¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

This is how we should be as Christians. We should long for His Word and His training. How often does Paul talk about dying to the flesh and pressing toward the prize? All the time! This is the Christian life. To constantly be living for Him, yearning, and desiring Him more than anything else in this life. This is what Jesus did, and this is why the 12th chapter of Hebrews starts out with the example of Jesus. Paul tells us in Philippians "let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus". Follow Jesus in His example to lay down your life so that the Father can raise you up.

The Father's training and discipline through His Word, develops us to endure persecution for the Gospel's sake, and at the same time it becomes a remedy to destroy sin in our life. This is the process of sanctification; thus, sanctification is the training and discipline of the Father.

It is the training of the Lord that sanctifies us and sets us apart from the world

<->.<->

Joyfully enduring persecution for the Name of Jesus

Christian persecution should be a part of every Christian's life. The world hated and still hates Jesus, and they will hate every Christian who believes and confesses His name. Christian persecution isn't just being a martyr for Jesus, although that certainly can be the result. Persecution is simply living for Jesus no matter the cost. Sometimes that cost is great, sometimes small. But living the Christian life for Jesus must start somewhere. It can simply be telling somebody about Jesus at work and then getting ridiculed and laughed at. None of us want this type of reception, but these reactions cannot deter or scare us from proclaiming the Name of Jesus. Why do we get so nervous about what somebody else will think when we start talking about Jesus? It is this apprehension the devil feeds on. He wants us to be nervous or hesitant to talk to people because he knows the proclamation of the gospel is salvation to all who hear and understand. When, instead, we should be telling everyone we can about Jesus and the wonderful hope we have in Him. When you do this, and start to break out of your comfort zone, you will find a joy unexplainable, a satisfaction in Him because you are doing what God has willed and planned for your life. Yes, it may come with some snide remarks, ridícule, and laughter, but don't let this bother you. "Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:15).

Just like anything in life, you must start somewhere. Let the Holy Spirit lead you, and commit yourself to obeying Him. Start your day by giving yourself and humbling your plans to the Father. Let Him know you are able and willing to do anything, and talk to anyone He wills. You will find yourself going thru the day with your spiritual ears turned on. As you talk to people, your conversations will naturally progress into something about Jesus. By obeying the word of the Lord, and sharing the Light of Jesus, you might be the only Light those people get all day. Don't worry about the outcome. We cannot control somebody's decisions. All we can do is be the mouthpiece to the Word, and know God is honored and

pleased by this. This small step of committing your day to Him, will turn into bigger responsibilities for the kingdom. Which, in turn, result in greater persecution, but also a greater number of people saturated by the name of Jesus, and more people coming to the Lord. Finally, you will become like Paul, when even being stoned to death for proclaiming Jesus is considered a light affliction, (2Cor 4:17, 11:23-28, Acts 4:19).

Below is a sermon from John Piper discussing Christian persecution. When | first heard this teaching, it changed my life. My perception of the Christian life started to transform.] used to consider the abundance of my life, and the rewards in this temporal world as the result of my faith and trust in Jesus. But what a poor example of Jesus. Why should, and how can the things in this world be the gauge of my trust and hope in Jesus? | found myself making the things of this world, and the quality of my life my hope, instead of my hope being in Jesus and Him alone. It is easy to say our hope is in Jesus, but still be entrenched in the things of this world. But when your hope is truly in Him, nothing in this world matters except to fulfill His plan. You become so satisfied in Him that nothing even compares to the goodness Jesus brings to your life. You can have a joy so full that worldly possessions no longer drive your soul. That is what I have come to experience in my life and it was John Piper's sermon on Hebrews 10:32-36 that put this in perspective. | used to read Hebrews 10:35-"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward." And associate the reward with my faith in temporal, worldly things.] used to think the reward was the result of my faith in God to meet my needs on the earth. The quality of my life, the kind of car | drove, the house | lived in, the stuff | owned. These are all worthless possessions that don't have anything to do with the reward this text is talking about. Now | know the reward is Jesus. He is everything | need and want, and if it means all my worldly possessions are plundered as a result of seeking Him and proclaiming the name of Jesus, then | will rejoice, because | know | have a better and lasting possession in Jesus.

Now, when I read and study the Word, that is all I see. Jesus wants us to continually make Him our treasure knowing that He is our reward.

Our joy is made complete in Him and because of this, we can have eternal happiness and unending joy, completely satisfied in Him no matter what comes against us.

The Plundering of Your Property and the Power of Hope John Piper 01-18-2015

Father, as we speak on hope, I ask that you would deepen, and intensify and strengthen, and release hope in every heart of this place. And the upshot of that hope, according to this text, would be a kind of compassion and a kind of courage that is willing to suffer for the Name. So come, I pray, do that deep, hard, glorious, beautiful, Christ exalting work, I ask through Christ. Amen.

So as I understand the text we will be looking at, the theme over our time together will be the connection between hope and courage, or hope and compassion, or hope and love, or hope and sacrifice. All those pieces go together. Hope and joy, courage, sacrifice, love, compassion, that is all one package when Christ comes into your life.

When you hope in Jesus as the ground for your future, He is also what you hope for. There is a lot of stuff to hope for that can preempt Jesus, underneath and on the top and in front. So, when you hear me today talk about hope, know | am saying, amen, amen, hope in, rooted in; Jesus our only hope. | want to seek Him. | want to be with Him, forever.

Let's go to Hebrews 10:32-36:

"But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully (that is a stunning, unexpected

word here) accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, (your hope) which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." (Hebrews 10:32-36).

The Church in America as I, at age 69, have watched her now for a long time, is slowly awakening from the distortion of about 350 years, namely the length of our country, of distortion of dominance and prosperity in America. What I mean by dominance is that in most of American history, until recently, being a Christian has been viewed by the wider culture as normal and good and patriotic and culturally acceptable and even beneficial. What I mean by prosperity is that being a Christian has generally resulted in things going well for us American Christians. And what I mean by distortion, is that this 350-year history of our dominance and prosperity has created a massively, deeply, unbiblical mindset, namely of at-homeness in the world. This has not been good for us. We are suffering from it, prosperous though we be.

We have been dominant and we have been prosperous, materially, and therefore we have come to feel at home in this world, and have developed a deeply ingrained assumption that things should go well for us, this is our place, it is the way we do things, it is the way we think about things, we are Christian here. And we very much enjoy being thought well of for that and we expect things to go well. And poverty and sickness and suffering and death are the worst things that can happen and there isn't anything much worse. We expect this Christian land to be wealthy, us to be wealthy, us to be healthy, ease, upbeat, success oriented. And we have developed a form of Christianity to support those types of expectations. Engrained expectations, to be a Christian is to be accepted, to be comfortable, to be secure, and to be prosperous, and that form of Christianity has focused mainly on how we feel, and whether our needs are getting met, and then we sell this, we offer this to people, come and life will go better for you. By and large, in America, for 300 years, the call to be a Christian

has not been the call to be an alien, by and large, it hasn't been a call to be a sojourner, or an exile, or to be out of step. It is a call to be a respected citizen in the community and we get angry, really angry, "If you treat my Christianity as though it is not the norm", we get angry. We say things like, "your taking away my culture, your taking away my land, my history, I'm getting mad at you." Because we have developed a Christianity with assumptions that assume dominance and prosperity and normal and fitting in, "This is our way here. If you don't like it go somewhere else."

There is enough truth in there to give it some traction, right? If you live like a Christian, if you don't get drunk every weekend, probably, you will be more successful in life. You will keep your job. Your marriage will probably go better if you don't come home drunk every Sunday night. It's true, and the Bible says don't get drunk and so if you do what the Bible says, life goes better. The Bible says work hard, if you don't work you don't eat. So, if you work hard, then you are probably going to prosper in your business a little more if you are a Christian. So, obviously we bring success. There is just enough truth in this that it gains traction. The problem is it is totally out of proportion. We have come to take all those relatively minor spinoffs of devotion to Jesus, and elevated them above the massive, real pleasures of knowing Him, loving Him, and dying and being with Him forever. Everything is out of proportion in typical American Christianity. This text fills me, as it has for so many years, with a longing not to be a domesticated, comfort seeking, entertainment addicted, prosperity loving, security craving, approval desiring, Christian. | don't want to be that. |t's abominable to me to be that. | don't want to waste my life just fitting in. | want to be set free from this distortion. | want to be Biblical. I want to have real, spiritual, other worldly power on my life. | want to have stunningly, counter-cultural, other worldly hope, driving this engine. So let's go to the text now and see what he says.

The writer tells the church to "recall the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings." The word "enlightened" is used at least two ways in the New Testament: it either refers to light that has come in to my heart and

given me a sight of spiritual reality, namely Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords. That is the way it is used in 2 Corinthians 4:6- For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to <u>give the Light</u> (that's the word) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

So, this is a reference to their awaking from darkness, where everything about Jesus was either boring or mythological or irrelevant, and light shined by the power of the Holy Spirit, whether by reading their Bible or hearing someone speak about Jesus, and suddenly light was happening and Jesus was everything to them. He became glorious and irresistible. He is my King, my Lord, my Savior, my friend, that is Light. And | think that is probably what is going on here in verse 32, "after you were enlightened". There is another use of the word in the New Testament. It is the word of Light coming out from you. The English word enlightened doesn't usually mean that, and that is why translation can be tricky. But when Paul says, "Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," (2 Timothy 1:10). That is the same word. Which means to be enlightened, is not only to have light flowing in, but light flowing out. That is, | am bringing light to the world, because | have been shown some things and they are changing me, so my very way of life is light. | am now more useful to the world, even as I begin to be rejected by the world. That is happening in this text. So, if you ask me what does the word enlightened mean in verse 32? After they were enlightened, they began to suffer. My answer is, both of those meanings are probably here since the word carries for the two, and they both really work here. This is a reference to their conversion. They are walking out of darkness into two things: seeing and showing Light. Seeing light, | have been changed by what | see. Light is coming into me, and now you are the light of the world, Jesus said to His disciples. Now, what is the result of verse 32 when this happens to you? This is how out of step we are, how different we are from the early Church in America today. "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings," (Hebrews 10:32). That was not un-natural. That was natural. When the

light shines in and begins to shine out, people out there hate the light. Jesus said they hate the light. Which means, that piece has largely been missing in America today. Test yourself, see where you are on this. If you get really mad at me, if you get spittin' mad, or if somebody writes something ugly, my first reaction is, | did it wrong. | said it wrong. | must have done something wrong, because if | were doing it well, | would be win-some. People would see my good works and give glory to my Father. That is Matthew 5:16. Do you know what is written just a few verses before Matthew 5:16- "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Amen, the American way, we always are approved. Look at verse 11- "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice! That is exactly what is happening in this text. Jesus said rejoice in that day for great is your reward in heaven. That is Hebrews 10:34, in the mouth of Jesus, 30-40 years earlier. So, one of my assumptions that has to go is, when | have light shining in and | begin to let light shine out, things are going to go well. | have to get rid of that thinking. Sometimes they go well, and sometimes they go badly, both texts are there. They will see your good works and give glory to your Father. Many people are moved by the good works of Christians. Amen, let it be. And many people hate the good works of Christians because of its roots and its branches, and all of its implications for their lives. So, the answer to what happens in the early Church, in Hebrews, when you get enlightened, is suffering often comes. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household." (Matthew 10:25). It is much more likely that you would get maligned if Jesus got maligned. And He did, He got crucified.

2 Timothy 3:12- Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Except in your city, where everyone is Godly. No, your city is not a surprise to Paul, nor America, nor the 21st century. If there is no person finding your faith troubling, it's

probably because it is not showing very well. "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you." (Luke 6:26). I didn't say that, Jesus did.

^I Peter 4:12–13-¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

We think it is strange. We, as Americans, think it strange if a fiery ordeal come upon you because you have stood for Christ. We say, something is wrong. I must have done it wrong. And the Bible is trying to help us wake up from this distortion.

So, when they were enlightened here, how did they suffer? Verse 33, "sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison." You have two groups of people. Some, because of their words or deeds, or attitudes, they suffered reproach, affliction, and they went to jail. And then you have another group of people, who watch that happen, and they have to decide, do we identify or not? Do we tell people, I am one of them, or just keep quiet? What happened to those who became partners with those in jail, those who identified themselves as Christians? Verse 34, "For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property." Can you get a scene in your mind? Some are in jail because they have vocalized their Christian commitments. And others are not in jail, who share those commitments and had compassion on those who were in prison. It is only recently that prisons are as comfortable as they are. In those days, you didn't get any food in prison unless your family brought it. So, to have compassion on a prisoner meant you had to identify or they are going to die in prison or something terrible is going to happen. We can't keep ourselves cut off from these Christians. So, they have to decide, do they go to the prisons to help them, but in doing so, they themselves would be arrested as well. What about our kids, our homes, our businesses? This is real. | know Martin | uther lived 1,500

years later, and wrote a Mighty Fortress, but | think they sang it. "Let goods and kindreds go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still, we're going to the prison."

Compassion trumps consumption. That is the text. "you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property." Because you had compassion on those in prison. That's the text. You prioritized the compassion for the prisoners over the protection of your possessions, and so they went on their way to the prison, and they looked over their shoulder and their houses are being trashed; windows broken, Christian get out of town written on the wall, furniture being thrown out, personal items being burned in the fire. And what did they do as they looked over their shoulder? Look at the text. They rejoiced. "you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property." That is so off the wall, un-American, I want that with all my might. I want that more than I want anything. I want to be the kind of lover of Jesus, the kind of hoper in Jesus, that if to follow Him, means to have my goods plundered, it will make my day. That is what it says. "they joyfully accepted the plundering of your property."

How is your faith? How is your priority? How is your consumption piece and your compassion piece? Your Christ piece and your worldly piece? We are so enslaved to our comforts and our securities and our acceptance in a world that has gone haywire, we can barely navigate any more. So, they suffered in prison and they got their goods plundered outside of prison because they identified with those in prison. When they did this, where did they get that kind of courage? Where did that compassion come from? Where does the courage come from to be a Christian? The answer is in verse 34. Joy is the strength that is carrying the day here. "Knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one."

Hope has a name, the possession has a name, the better and the eternal has a name. His name is Jesus. We hope in Him, we hope for Him. Paul said, for me to die is gain,] am torn.] want to depart and be with Christ

for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account, (Phil 1:21-23).

Do you believe that? Do you believe that to die is better than living? Paul did. These people did. That is where the joy came from as they went to prison. That is where the joy came from as they lost their property. You joyfully accepted the seizure of your property means your hope in the better and abiding possession is so real, these aren't just words for you. I would ask you, are these just words for you, or are they realities for you? Is your possession beyond the grave more precious than anything this world offers? If it is not, you won't live like this.

That is what 350 years has ruined. It has made us at home here. This world is more precious than that world. It makes us say, "I'm not going to the prison, I'm not going to say anything or do anything that would make this life, which is my real love, uncomfortable. Nope, not going to do it."

Notice the two things in verse 34, abiding and better. Better means this life is inferior, that life is better. Abiding means this life is temporary, that life is forever. My favorite verse in the Psalms is Psalm 16:11- You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is <u>fullness of joy</u>; in Your right hand there are <u>pleasures forever</u>. Do you hear those words? Fullness of joy, pleasures forever. Does that sound familiar to verse 34? Better and abiding; better- full; abidingforever.

There is nothing in this world that can offer fullness of joy and pleasures forever. Not only can this world not offer it, it can't even conceive of it. It is inconceivable that there is something fuller than full. And it is inconceivable that there is anything longer than eternal. This Hope is full and forever. And there is nothing fuller than full. These people, in the text, have found what every human being is looking for. I don't have any doubt that every human being in this room is looking for the very best happiness and the very longest happiness. Happiness that peters out on me after 80 years, no thank you. Everybody on the planet,

by God's design, wants the best happiness and the longest happiness, and only Christians know this happiness. It is Jesus. Jesus died to get that for sinners. You might be saying, "there is no way, after what I have done, that I could be the beneficiary of the fullness possible happiness and the longest possible happiness in Jesus, because you don't know what I have done in my life." And I would say, yes, He does. Which is why this church loves to sing about the blood of Jesus. Because it was so infinitely costly, that it can cover the very worst of lives, and invite people out of the failing darkness into the light of full and everlasting joy.

If we are going to be courageous and fearless before our opponents, if we are going to live so that the worth of the gospel is manifest, if we are going to take the risks the early Christians took for Christ and his kingdom, if we are going to hope fully, then we are going to have to set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. We are going to have to focus our mind's attention and our heart's affection on the better and abiding worth of our reward in heaven — God.

As you enter a series of messages on hope, and Jesus as the sum and apex of your present and eternal hope, | pray that the God of hope will release in this church and in this city a tidal wave of Christian compassion and courage, and that He would make Hebrews 10:34 a reality: you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you know you have a better and abiding one.





~132~



"The tyrant's torments had been brought to naught by Christ through the endurance of the blessed saints"



or the last two thousand years, since Jesus came to the earth, there has been tens of thousands of Christians who have given their lives for the name of Jesus, and there are countless more to come before Jesus comes back to set up

His kingdom on the earth.] enjoin, for a moment, to remember those who gave their lives for Jesus. Those who **"overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and loved not their lives even unto death." (Revelation 12:11).** These men and women gave everything they had, even their lives, because they knew of a better and lasting possession. They knew Jesus and were willing to die for His Name, because to them, Jesus was more important than anything in this temporal world. As you read these accounts, be encouraged, as I am, by these great people of God.

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Revelation 2:10

²⁸ Some were tortured so cruelly that it seemed impossible for them to live even if they had had every care, yet survived in the prison, bereft of human attention but strengthened by the Lord and given power in body and soul, and looking after and comforting the rest.

³⁵ For the one went forth gladly; glory and great grace were mingled on their faces, so that they wore even their fetters as a becoming ornament, like a bride adorned with golden lace of many patterns, and they were perfumed with the sweet savour of Christ, so that some supposed that they had been anointed with worldly unguents.

~Eusebius, Book 5, chapter 1

James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John (died 44AD)

IX. Now at that time,"-obviously that of Claudius,-"Herod the king put forth his hand to vex certain of the church and killed James the brother of John with the sword." ¹ Concerning this James, Clement adds in the seventh book of the *Hypotyposes* a story worth mentioning, apparently from the tradition of his predecessors, to the effect that he who brought him to the court was so moved at seeing him testify as to confess that he also was himself a Christian. ² "So they were both led away together," he says, "and on the way he asked for forgiveness for himself from James. And James looked at him for a moment and said, 'Peace be to you,' and kissed him. ³ So both were beheaded at the same time."

~Eusebius, Book 2, chapter 9

Peter and Paul (died 67AD)

St. Peter, after various miracles, retired to Rome, where he defeated the artifices, and confounded the magic of Simon Magus, a

great favorite of the emperor Nero: he likewise converted to Christianity one of the concubines of that monarch, which so exasperated the tyrant, that he ordered both St. Peter and St. Paul to be apprehended. During the time of their confinement, they converted two of the captains of the guard, and forty-seven other persons to Christianity. Having been nine months in prison, Peter was brought from thence for execution, when after being severely scourged, he was crucified with his head downwards; which position, however, was at his own request.

~Foxes Book of Martyrs, chapter 9

Ignatius (died 108AD)

XXXVI. 1 At this time there flourished in Asia, Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, who had been appointed to the bishopric of the church in Smyrna by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Lord. Distinguished men at the same time were Papias, ² who was himself bishop of the diocese of Hierapolis, and Ignatius, still a name of note to most men, the second after Peter to succeed to the bishopric of Antioch.³ The story goes that he, (Igantius), was sent from Syria to Rome to be eaten by beasts in testimony to Christ. ⁴ He was taken through Asia under most careful guard, and strengthened by his speech and exhortation, the diocese of each city in which he stayed. He particularly warned them to be on their guard against the heresies which then for the first time were beginning to obtain, and exhorted them to hold fast to the tradition of the Apostles, to which he thought necessary, for safety's sake, to give the form of written testimony. Thus, while he was in Smyrna where Polycarp was, he wrote one letter to the church at Ephesus, ⁵ mentioning their pastor Onesimus, and another to the church at Magnesia on the Meander (and here, too, he mentioned the bishop Damas), and another to the church in Tralles, of which he relates that Polybius was then the ruler. In addition to these he also wrote to the church at Rome, ⁶ and to it he extended the request that they should not deprive him of the hope for which he longed by begging him off from his martyrdom. It is worth while appending a short extract from this in support of what has been said. He writes as follows: 7 "From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, by

land and sea, by night and day, bound to ten 'leopards' (that is, a company of soldiers), and they become worse for kind treatment. Now I become the more a disciple for their ill deeds, 'but not by this am I justified.'

I long for the beasts that are prepared for me;

⁸ and I pray that they may be found prompt for me; I will even entice them to devour me promptly; not as has happened to some whom they have not touched from fear; even if they be unwilling of themselves, I will force them to it. ⁹ Grant me this favour. I know what is expedient for me; now I am beginning to be a disciple. May I envy nothing of things seen or unseen that I may attain to Jesus Christ. Let there come on me fire, and cross, and struggles with wild beasts, cutting, and tearing asunder, rackings of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain to Jesus Christ!"

¹² Irenaeus also knew of his martyrdom and quotes his letters saying thus: "As one of the Christians said when he was condemned to the beasts as testimony for God,

> 'I am the wheat of God and I am ground by the teeth of beasts that I may be found pure bread.'"

¹³ Polycarp, too, mentions these same things in the letter to the Philippians bearing his name and says: "Now I beseech you all to obey the word of righteousness, and to practise all the endurance which you also saw before your eyes, not only in the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and in the other Apostles; being persuaded that all of these 'ran not in vain,' but in faith and righteousness, and that they are with the Lord in the 'place which is their due,' with whom they also suffered.

For they did not 'love this present world' but him who died on our behalf, and was raised by God for our sakes."

¹⁴ And he continues later, "Both you and Ignatius wrote to me that if anyone was going to Syria he should also take your letters. I

will do this if I have a convenient opportunity, either myself or the man whom I am sending as a representative for you and me. ¹⁵ We send you, as you asked, the letters of Ignatius, which were sent to us by him, and others which we had by us. These are subjoined to this letter, and you will be able to benefit greatly from them. For they contain faith, patience, and all the edification which pertains to our Lord." Such is the story concerning Ignatius, and Heros succeeded to the bishopric of Antioch after him.

~Eusebius, Book 3, chapter 36

Polycarp (died 167AD)

XV. ¹ At this time Polycarp was consecrated by martyrdom when great persecutions again disturbed Asia, and I think it most necessary to give in this history the account of his end, which is still extant in writing. ² The document purports to be from the church of which he was the leader, and gives to the neighbouring dioceses the following account of what happened to him. ³ "The Church of God which sojourns in Smyrna, to the Church of God which sojourns in Philomelium,² and to all the sojournings of the Holy Catholic Church in every place. Mercy, peace, and love of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied. We write to you, brethren, the story of the martyrs and of the blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution by his martyrdom as though adding the seal."

⁴ They then go on, before the narrative about Polycarp, to give the story of the other martyrs, describing the constancy which they showed against torture, for they say that those who were standing around were amazed when they saw that at one time they were torn by scourges down to deep-seated veins and arteries, so that the hidden contents of the recesses of their bodies, their entrails and organs, were exposed to sight. At another time, they were stretched on seashells and on sharp points, were taken through all kinds of punishment and torture, and finally were given to be eaten by wild beasts. They say that the noble Germanicus was especially distinguished, ⁵ being strengthened by the grace of God to overcome the natural cowardice of the body for death. Even when the proconsul wished to dissuade him, urging his youth and entreating him as he was still just in the flower of his youth to have pity on himself, he did not hesitate, but took pains to drag the beast to himself, almost forcing him and provoking him in order that he might be the sooner free from an unjust and wicked life. ⁶ At his glorious death the whole crowd was amazed at the God-loving martyr for his bravery, and at the courage of the whole race of Christians, and began to howl out together, "Kill the atheists! Let Polycarp be sent for." ...

⁹ Yet the wonderful Polycarp, when he first heard this, remained undisturbed, keeping his mind steadfast and unmoved, and wished to stay there in the city. But the urgency of his friends and their entreaty that he should go out persuaded him, and he departed to a farm not far from the city where he stayed with a few others, and night and day did nothing but persevere in prayers to the Lord. In them he entreated and supplicated for peace, begging that it be given the churches throughout the world, for this was his invariable custom. While he was praying, 10 in a vision at night three days before his capture, he saw the pillow under his head suddenly flaming with fire and so destroyed, and when he woke up at this he at once interpreted what he had seen to those present, all but foretelling the future and clearly announcing to his friends that in fire he must give up his life for Christ's sake. While those who were seeking for him were pressing on with great zeal, " he was again constrained by the affection and love of the brethren to move to another farm. Shortly after the pursuers came up and arrested two of the slaves there. They tortured one of them and were brought by him to the abode of Polycarp. They entered in the evening and found him lying in an upper chamber. It was possible for him to have moved thence to another house, ¹² but he was not willing and said, "The Lord's will be done." When he heard that they had come, so the story says, 13 he went down and conversed with them with a bright and gentle countenance, so that those who did not know him before thought that they saw a marvel when they regarded his old age and his venerable and steadfast behaviour, and they wondered that there should be such activity for the arrest of an old man of such character. 14 He did not delay but immediately ordered a table to be set for them and invited them to partake of plentiful food, asking from them a single hour that he might pray undisturbed. They gave him leave, and he arose and prayed, filled with the grace of the Lord, so that those who were present were astonished when they heard his prayer, and many of them

already began to repent that so venerable and godlike an old man was going to be killed.

¹⁵ After this the document concerning him continues as follows: "Now when he had at last finished his prayer, after remembering all who had ever even come his way, both small and great, high and low, and the whole Catholic Church throughout the world, the hour came for departure, and they set him on an ass, and led him into the city, on a 'great Sabbath day.' And the police captain Herod and his father Niketas met him and removed him into the wagon, and sat by his side trying to persuade him and saying: 'But what harm is it to say, "Lord Caesar," and to offer sacrifice, and to be saved?' But he at first did not answer them, but when they continued he said: 'I am not going to do what you counsel me.' And they gave up the attempt to persuade him, 16 and began to speak fiercely, and turned him out in such a hurry that in getting down from the wagon he scraped his shin; and without turning round, as though he had suffered nothing, he walked on promptly and quickly, and was taken to the arena, while the uproar in the arena was so great that no one could even be heard. ¹⁷ Now when Polycarp entered into the arena there came a voice from heaven:

'Be of good cheer, Polycarp, and play the man.'

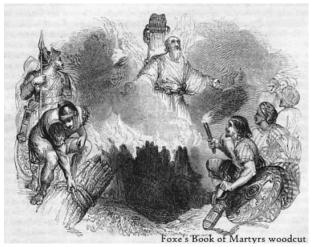
And no one saw the speaker, but many of our friends who were there heard the voice. ¹⁸ And when he was brought forward, there was a great uproar of those who heard that Polycarp had been arrested. Next when he approached, the proconsul asked him if he were Polycarp, and when he admitted it he tried to persuade him to deny... But when the Governor pressed him and said: 'Take the oath and I will let you go, ²⁰ revile Christ,'

Polycarp said: 'For eighty and six years have I been his servant, and he has done me no wrong, and how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'

But when he persisted again, and said: 'Swear by the genius of Caesar,' ²¹ he said: 'If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, and pretend that you are ignorant who I am, listen plainly: I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn the doctrine of Christianity fix a day and listen.' ... And the proconsul

A Tribute to Christian Martyrs

said: 'I have wild beasts, I will deliver you to them, unless you change your mind.' ²³ And he said: 'Call for them, for change of mind from better to worse is a change we may not make; but it is good to change from evil to righteousness.' 24 And he said again to him: 'I will cause you to be consumed by fire, if you despise the beasts, unless you repent.' But Polycarp said: 'You threaten with the fire that burns for a time, and is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgement to come and in everlasting punishment. 25 But why are you waiting? Come, do what you will.' And with these and many other words he was filled with courage and joy, and his face was full of grace, so that it not only did not fall with trouble at the things said to him, but that the proconsul, on the other hand, was astounded and sent his herald into the midst of the arena to announce three times: 'Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian.' ²⁶ When this had been said by the herald, all the multitude of heathen and Jews living in Smyrna cried out with uncontrollable wrath and a loud shout: 'This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teaches many neither to offer sacrifice nor to worship.' And when they said this, 27 they cried out and asked Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion on Polycarp. But he said he could not legally do this, since he had closed the sports. Then they found it good to cry out with one mind that he should burn Polycarp alive, ²⁸ for the vision which had appeared to him on his pillow must be fulfilled, when he saw it burning, while he was praying and he turned and said prophetically to those of the faithful who were with him, 'I must be burnt alive.' These things then happened with so great speed, 29 quicker than it takes to tell, and the crowd came together immediately, and prepared wood and faggots from the workshops and baths and the Jews were extremely zealous, as is their custom, in assisting at this. Now when the fire was ready he put off all his clothes, ³⁰ and loosened his girdle and tried also to take off his shoes, a thing he was not used to doing, because each of the faithful was always zealous, which of them might the more quickly touch his flesh. For he had been treated with all respect because of his noble life, even before his old age.



Polycarp

³¹ Immediately, therefore, he was fastened to the instruments which had been prepared for the fire, but when they were going to nail him as well he said: 'Leave me thus, for He who gives me power to endure the fire, will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails.' So they did not nail him, but bound him, ³² and he put his hands behind him and was bound, as a noble ram that is offered out of a great flock as a whole burnt offering acceptable to Almighty God;

³³ and he said: 'O Father of thy beloved and blessed Child, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of thee, the God of angels and powers, and of all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous, who live before thee! I bless thee, that Thou hast granted me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, for the Resurrection to everlasting life, both of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. And may I, ³⁴ to-day, be received among them before Thee, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as Thou, the God who lies not and is truth, hast prepared beforehand, and shown forth, and fulfilled. For this reason I also praise Thee for all things, ³⁵ I bless Thee, I glorify Thee through the everlasting and heavenly high, priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Child, through whom be glory to Thee with Him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come, Amen.'

³⁶ Now when he had uttered his Amen and finished his prayer, the men in charge of the fire lit it, and a great flame blazed up and we, to whom it was given to see, saw a marvel. And we have been preserved to report to others what befell. 37 For the fire made the likeness of a room, like the sail of a vessel filled with wind, and surrounded the body of the martyr as with a wall, and he was within it not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver being refined in a furnace. And we perceived such a fragrant smell as the scent of incense or other costly spices. At length the lawless men, ³⁸ seeing that his body could not be consumed by the fire, commanded an executioner to go up and stab him with a dagger, and when he did this, 30 there came out much blood, so that the fire was quenched, and all the crowd marvelled that there was such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect. And of the elect was he indeed one, the wonderful martyr, Polycarp, who in our days was an apostolic and prophetic teacher, bishop of the Catholic Church in Smyrna. For every word which he uttered from his mouth both was fulfilled and will be fulfilled.

⁴⁰ But the jealous and envious evil one who resists the family of the righteous, when he saw the greatness of his martyrdom, and his blameless career from the beginning, and that he was crowned with the crown of immortality, and had carried off the unspeakable prize, took care that not even his poor body should be taken away by us, though many desired to do so, and to have fellowship with his holy flesh. ⁴¹ Therefore he put forward Niketas, the father of Herod, and the brother of Alce, to ask the Governor not to give his body, 'lest,' he said, 'they leave the crucified one and begin to worship this man.' And they said this owing to the suggestions and pressure of the Jews, who also watched when we were going to take it from the fire, for they do not know that we shall not ever be able either to abandon Christ, who suffered for the salvation of those who are being saved in the whole world, or to worship any other. For him we worship as the Son of God, ⁴² but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord; and rightly, because of their unsurpassable affection toward their own King and Teacher. God grant that we too may be their companions and fellow-disciples. When therefore the centurion saw the contentiousness caused by the Jews, ⁴³ he put the body in the midst, as was their custom, and burnt it. Thus we, at last, took up his bones, more precious than precious stones, and finer than gold,

and put them where it was meet. There the Lord will permit us to come together according to our power in gladness and joy, and celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, ⁴⁴ both in memory of those who have already contested, and for the practice and training of those whose fate it shall be. Such was the lot of the blessed Polycarp, who though he was, together with those from Philadelphia, ⁴⁵ the twelfth martyr in Smyrna, is alone especially remembered by all, so that he is spoken of in every place, even by the heathen."

⁴⁶ This great end was vouchsafed to the life of the marvelous and apostolic Polycarp, as the Christians of the church at Smyrna have given the story in their letter which we have quoted.

~Eusebius, Book 4, chapter 14

Sanctus

²⁰ "Sanctus also himself endured nobly, beyond measure or human power, all the ill-treatment of men, for though the wicked hoped through persistence and the rigour of his tortures to wring from him something wrong, he resisted them with such constancy that he did not even tell his own name, or the race or the city whence he was, nor whether he was slave or free, but to all questions answered in Latin,

'Ego Christiana'

'I am a Christian'

This he said for name and city and race and for everything else, and the heathen heard no other sound from him. ²¹ For this reason the governor and the torturers were very ambitious to subdue him, so that when they had nothing left at all to do to him at last they fastened plates of heated brass to the tenderest parts of his body. His limbs were burning, but he continued himself unbending and unyielding, ²² firm in his confession, refreshed and strengthened by the heavenly spring of the water of life which proceeds forth from the body of Christ. His body was a witness to his treatment; ²³ it was all one wound and bruise, wrenched and torn out of human shape, but Christ suffering in him manifested great glory, overthrowing the adversary and showing for the example of the others how there is nothing fearful where there is the love of the Father nor painful where there is the glory of Christ. ²⁴ For when the wicked after some days again tortured the martyr they thought that they might overcome him now that his body was swollen and inflamed if they applied the same tortures, seeing that he could not even endure to be touched by the hand, or that by dying under torture he would put fear into the rest. Yet not only did nothing of this kind happen, but, beyond all human expectation, he raised himself up and his body was straightened in the subsequent tortures, and he regained his former appearance and the use of his limbs, so that through the grace of Christ the second torturing became not torment but cure.

~Eusebius, Book 5, chapter 1

Maturus and Sanctus

³⁶ After a few more sentences they go on again: "After this the testimony of their death fell into every kind of variety. For they wove various colours and all kinds of flowers into one wreath to offer to the Father, and so it was necessary for the noble athletes to undergo a varied contest, and after great victory to receive the great crown of immortality.

Maturus and Sanctus and Blandína and Attalus were led forth to the wild beasts, ³⁷ to the public, and to a common exhibition of the inhumanity of the heathen, for the day of fighting with beasts was specially appointed for the Christians.

Maturus and Sanctus passed again through all torture in the amphitheatre as though they had suffered nothing before,

³⁸ but rather as though, having conquered the opponent in many bouts, they were now striving for his crown, once more they ran the gauntlet in the accustomed manner, endured the worrying of the wild beasts, and everything which the maddened public, some in one way, some in another, were howling for and commanding, finally, the iron chair on which the roasting of their own bodies clothed them with its reek. Their persecutors did not stop even here, but went on growing more and more furious, wishing to conquer their endurance, ³⁹ yet gained nothing from Sanctus beyond the sound of the confession which he had been accustomed to make from the beginning. ⁴⁰ "Thus after a long time, when their life still remained in them through the great contest, they were at last sacrificed, having been made a spectacle to the world throughout that day as a substitute for all the variations of gladiatorial contests.

~Eusebius, Book 5, chapter 1

Blandína

⁴¹ but Blandina was hung on a stake and offered as a prey to the wild beasts that were let in.



Blandína

She seemed to be hanging in the shape of a cross, and by her continuous prayer gave great zeal to the combatants, while they looked on during the contest, and with their outward eyes saw in the form of their sister him who was crucified for them, to persuade those who believe on him that all who suffer for the glory of Christ have forever fellowship with the living God. ⁴² Then when none of the beasts would touch her she was taken down from the stake and brought back into the jail,

and was thus preserved for another contest, in order that by winning through more trials she might make irrevocable the condemnation of the crooked serpent, and might encourage the brethren; for small and weak and despised as she was, she had put on the great and invincible athlete, Christ; she had overcome the adversary in many contests, and through the struggle had gained the crown of immortality.

⁵³ "In addition to all this, on the last day of the gladiatorial sports, Blandina was again brought in with Ponticus, a boy of about fifteen years old, and they had been brought in every day to see the torture of the others, and efforts were made to force them to swear by the idols, and the mob was furious against them because they had remained steadfast and disregarded them, so that there was neither pity for the youth of the boy nor respect for the sex of the woman.

⁵⁴ They exposed them to all the terrors and put them through every torture in turn, trying to make them swear, but not being able to do so.

For Ponticus was encouraged by the Christian sister, so that even the heathen saw that she was exhorting and strengthening him, and after nobly enduring every torture he gave up his spirit. ⁵⁵ But the blessed Blandina, last of all, like a noble mother who had encouraged her children and sent them forth triumphant to the king, having herself endured all the tortures of the children, hastened to them, rejoicing and glad at her departure as though invited to a marriage feast rather than cast to the beasts. And after scourging, ⁵⁶ after the beasts, after the gridiron, she was at last put in a net and thrown to a bull. She was tossed about a long time by the beast, having no more feeling for what happened to her through her hope and hold on what had been entrusted to her and her converse with Christ. And so she too was sacrificed, and the heathen themselves confessed that never before among them had a woman suffered so much and so long.

~Eusebius, Book 5, chapter 1

Pothínus

²⁹ "The blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the ministry of the bishopric at Lyons, was over ninety years old and very weak physically. He was scarcely breathing through the physical weakness which had already come upon him,

but was strengthened by zeal of spirit through urgent desire of martyrdom.

He was dragged before the judgement-seat, and although his body was weakened by old age and disease, his soul was kept in him in order that through it Christ might triumph. He was brought by soldiers to the judgement-seat; the local authorities accompanied him, ³⁰ and all the populace, uttering all kinds of howls at him as though he was Christ himself, but he gave noble testimony. When asked by the governor, Who was the God of the Christians, ³¹ he said, 'If you are worthy, you will know.' And then he was dragged about without mercy, and suffered many blows; for those who were near ill-treated him with feet and hands and in every way, without respect even for his old age, and those who were at a distance each threw at him whatever he had at hand, and all thought that it would be a great transgression and impiety to omit any abuse against him. For they thought that in this way they would vindicate their gods. And he was thrown into prison scarcely breathing and after two days yielded up the ghost.

~Eusebius, Book 5, chapter 1

Romanus

¹ WHAT occurred to Romanus on the same day at Antioch, is also worthy of record. For he was a native of Palestine, a deacon and exorcist in the parish of Cæsarea; and being present at the destruction of the churches, he beheld many men, with women and children, going up in crowds to the idols and sacrificing. But, through his great zeal for religion, he could not endure the sight, and rebuked them with a loud voice.

² Being arrested for his boldness, he proved a most noble witness of the truth, if there ever was one.

For when the judge informed him that he was to die by fire, he received the sentence with cheerful countenance and most ready mind, and was led away.

When he was bound to the stake, and the wood piled up around him, as they were awaiting the arrival of the emperor before lighting the fire, he cried, "Where is the fire for me?"

³ Having said this, he was summoned again before the emperor, and subjected to the unusual torture of having his tongue cut out. But he endured this with fortitude and showed to all by his deeds that the Divine Power is present with those who endure any hardship whatever for the sake of religion, lightening their sufferings and strengthening their zeal. When he learned of this strange mode of punishment, the noble man was not terrified, but put out his tongue readily, and offered it with the greatest alacrity to those who cut it off. ⁴ After this punishment he was thrown into prison, and suffered there for a very long time. At last the twentieth anniversary of the emperor being near, when, according to an established gracious custom, liberty was proclaimed everywhere to all who were in bonds, he alone had both his feet stretched over five holes in the stocks, and while he lay there was strangled, and was thus honored with martyrdom, as he desired.

⁵ Although he was outside of his country, yet, as he was a native of Palestine, it is proper to count him among the Palestinian martyrs. These things occurred in this manner during the first year, when the persecution was directed only against the rulers of the Church.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 2

Gight Martyrs

³ As this report increased and spread in all directions, six young men, namely, Timolaus, a native of Pontus, Dionysius from Tripolis

in Phœnicia, Romulus, a sub-deacon of the parish of Diospolis, Pæsis and Alexander, both Egyptians, and another Alexander from Gaza, having first bound their own hands, went in haste to Vrbanus, who was about to open the exhibition, evidencing great zeal for martyrdom.

They confessed that they were Christians,

and by their ambition for all terrible things, showed that those who glory in the religion of the God of the universe do not cower before the attacks of wild beasts.

⁴ Immediately, after creating no ordinary astonishment in the governor and those who were with him, they were cast into prison. After a few days two others were added to them. One of them, named Agapius, had in former confessions endured dreadful torments of various kinds. The other, who had supplied them with the necessaries of life, was called Dionysius. All of these eight were beheaded on one day at Cæsarea, on the twenty-fourth day of the month Dystrus, which is the ninth before the Kalends of April.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 3

Apphíanus

¹ MAXIMINVS CÆSAR having come at that time into the government, as if to manifest to all the evidences of his inborn enmity against God, and of his impiety, armed himself for persecution against us more vigorously than his predecessors. ² In consequence, no little confusion arose among all, and they scattered here and there, endeavoring in some way to escape the danger; and there was great commotion everywhere. But what words would suffice for a suitable description of the Divine love and boldness, in confessing God, of the blessed and truly innocent lamb,—I refer to the martyr Apphianus,—who presented in the sight of all, before the gates of Cæsarea, a wonderful example of piety toward the only God.

³ He was at that time not twenty years old. He had first spent a long time at Berytus, for the sake of a secular Grecian education, as

he belonged to a very wealthy family. It is wonderful to relate how, in such a city, he was superior to youthful passions, and clung to virtue, uncorrupted neither by his bodily vigor nor his young companions; living discreetly, soberly and piously, in accordance with his profession of the Christian doctrine and the life of his teachers.

⁴ If it is needful to mention his native country, and give honor to it as producing this noble athlete of piety, we will do so with pleasure.

⁵ The young man came from Pagæ,—if any one is acquainted with the place,—a city in Lycia of no mean importance. After his return from his course of study in Berytus, though his father held the first place in his country, he could not bear to live with him and his relatives, as it did not please them to live according to the rules of religion. Therefore, as if he were led by the Divine Spirit, and in accordance with a natural, or rather an inspired and true philosophy, regarding this preferable to what is considered the glory of life, and despising bodily comforts, he secretly left his family. And because of his faith and hope in God, paying no attention to his daily needs, he was led by the Divine Spirit to the city of Cæsarea, where was prepared for him the crown of martyrdom for piety.

⁶ Abiding with us there, and conferring with us in the Divine Scriptures diligently for a short time, and fitting himself zealously by suitable exercises, he exhibited such an end as would astonish any one should it be seen again. ⁷ Who, that hears of it, would not justly admire his courage, boldness, constancy, and even more than these the daring deed itself, which evidenced a zeal for religion and a spirit truly superhuman?

⁸ For in the second attack upon us under Maximinus, in the third year of the persecution, edicts of the tyrant were issued for the first time, commanding that the rulers of the cities should diligently and speedily see to it that all the people offered sacrifices. Throughout the city of Cæsarea, by command of the governor, the heralds were summoning men, women, and children to the temples of the idols, and besides this, the chiliarchs were calling out each one by name from a roll, and an immense crowd of the wicked were rushing together from all quarters. Then this youth fearlessly, while no one was aware of his intentions, eluded both us who lived in the house with him and the whole band of soldiers that surrounded the governor, and rushed up to Vrbanus as he was offering libations, and fearlessly seizing him by the right hand, straightway put a stop to his sacrificing, and skillfully and persuasively, with a certain divine inspiration, exhorted him to abandon his delusion, because it was not well to forsake the one and only true God, and sacrifice to idols and demons.

⁹ It is probable that this was done by the youth through a divine power which led him forward, and which all but cried aloud in his act, that Christians, who were truly such, were so far from abandoning the religion of the God of the universe which they had once espoused, that they were not only superior to threats and the punishments which followed, but yet bolder to speak with noble and untrammeled tongue, and, if possible, to summon even their persecutors to turn from their ignorance and acknowledge the only true God.

¹⁰ Thereupon, he of whom we are speaking, and that instantly, as might have been expected after so bold a deed, was torn by the governor and those who were with him as if by wild beasts. And having endured manfully innumerable blows over his entire body, he was straightway cast into prison.

¹¹ There he was stretched by the tormentor with both his feet in the stocks for a night and a day; and the next day he was brought before the judge. As they endeavored to force him to surrender, he exhibited all constancy under suffering and terrible tortures. His sides were torn, not once or twice, but many times, to the bones and the very bowels; and he received so many blows on his face and neck that those who for a long time had been well acquainted with him could not recognize his swollen face.

¹² But as he would not yield under this treatment, the torturers, as commanded, covered his feet with linen cloths soaked in oil and set them on fire. No word can describe the agonies which the blessed one endured from this. For the fire consumed his flesh and penetrated to his bones, so that the humors of his body were melted and oozed out and dropped down like wax.

¹³ But as he was not subdued by this, his adversaries being defeated and unable to comprehend his superhuman constancy, cast him again into prison. A third time he was brought before the judge; and having witnessed the same profession, being half dead, he was finally thrown into the depths of the sea. ¹⁴ But what happened immediately after this will scarcely be believed by those who did not see it. Although we realize this, yet we must record the event, of which to speak plainly, all the inhabitants of Cæsarea were witnesses. For truly there was no age but beheld this marvelous sight.

¹⁵ For as soon as they had cast this truly sacred and thrice-blessed youth into the fathomless depths of the sea, an uncommon commotion and disturbance agitated the sea and all the shore about it, so that the land and the entire city were shaken by it. And at the same time with this wonderful and sudden perturbation, the sea threw out before the gates of the city the body of the divine martyr, as if unable to endure it.

Such was the death of the wonderful Apphianus.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 4

Agapíus

¹ IN the fourth year of the persecution against us, on the twelfth day before the Kalends of December, which is the twentieth day of the month Dius, on the day before the Sabbath,⁴ while the tyrant Maximinus was present and giving magnificent shows in honor of his birthday, the following event, truly worthy of record, occurred in the city of Cæsarea.

² As it was an ancient custom to furnish the spectators more splendid shows when the emperors were present than at other times, new and foreign spectacles taking the place of the customary amusements, such as animals brought from India or Ethiopia or other places, or men who could astonish the beholders with skillful bodily exercises,—it was necessary at this time, as the emperor was giving the exhibition, to add to the shows something more wonderful. And what should this be?

³ A witness of our doctrine was brought into the midst and endured the contest for the true and only religion. This was Agapius, who, as we have stated a little above, was, with Thecla, the second to be thrown to the wild beasts for food. He had also, three times and more, marched with malefactors from the prison to the arena; and every time, after threats from the judge, whether in compassion or in hope that he might change his mind, had been reserved for other conflicts. But the emperor being present, he was brought out at this time, as if he had been appropriately reserved for this occasion, until the very word of the Saviour should be fulfilled in him, which through divine knowledge he declared to his disciples, that they should be brought before kings on account of their testimony unto him.⁶

⁴ He was taken into the midst of the arena with a certain malefactor who they said was charged with the murder of his master.

⁵ But this murderer of his master, when he had been cast to the wild beasts, was deemed worthy of compassion and humanity, almost like Barabbas in the time of our Saviour. And the whole theater resounded with shouts and cries of approval, because the murderer was humanely saved by the emperor, and deemed worthy of honor and freedom.

⁶ But the athlete of religion was first summoned by the tyrant and promised liberty if he would deny his profession. But he testified with a loud voice that, not for any fault, but for the religion of the Creator of the universe, he would readily and with pleasure endure whatever might be inflicted upon him. Having said this, he joined the deed ⁷ to the word, and rushed to meet a bear which had been let loose against him, surrendering himself most cheerfully to be devoured by him. After this, as he still breathed, he was cast into prison. And living yet one day, stones were bound to his feet, and he was drowned in the depths of the sea. Such was the martyrdom of Agapius.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 6

Theodosía

¹ AGAIN, in Cæsarea, when the persecution had continued to the fifth year, on the second day of the month Xanthicus, which is the fourth before the Nones of April, on the very Lord's day of our Saviour's resurrection,² Theodosia, a virgin from Tyre, a faithful and sedate maiden, not yet eighteen years of age, went up to certain prisoners who were confessing the kingdom of Christ and sitting before the judgment seat, and saluted them, and, as is probable, besought them to remember her when they came before the Lord. ² Thereupon, as if she had committed a profane and impious act, the soldiers seized her and led her to the governor. And he immediately, like a madman and a wild beast in his anger, tortured her with dreadful and most terrible torments in her sides and breasts, even to the very bones. And as she still breathed, and withal stood with a joyful and beaming countenance, he ordered her thrown into the waves of the sea. Then passing from her to the other confessors, he condemned all of them to the copper mines in Phæno in Palestine.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 7

Pamphilus and others with him

¹ IT is time to describe the great and celebrated spectacle of Pamphilus, a man thrice dear to me, and of those who finished their course with him. They were twelve in all; being counted worthy of apostolic grace and number.

² Of these the leader and the only one honored with the position of presbyter at Cæsarea, was Pamphilus; a man who through his entire life was celebrated for every virtue, for renouncing and despising the world, for sharing his possessions with the needy, for contempt of earthly hopes, and for philosophic deportment and exercise. He especially excelled all in our time in most sincere devotion to the Divine Scriptures and indefatigable industry in whatever he undertook, and in his helpfulness to his relatives and associates.

³ In a separate treatise on his life, consisting of three books, we have already described the excellence of his virtue. Referring to this work those who delight in such things and desire to know them, let us now consider the martyrs in order.

⁴ Second after Pamphilus, Vales, who was honored for his venerable gray hair, entered the contest. He was a deacon from Ælia, an old man of gravest appearance, and versed in the Divine Scriptures, if any one ever was. He had so laid up the memory of them in his heart that he did not need to look at the books if he undertook to repeat any passage of Scripture.

⁵ The third was Paul from the city of Jamna, who was known among them as most zealous and fervent in spirit. Previous to his martyrdom, he had endured the conflict of confession by cauterization.

After these persons had continued in prison for two entire years, the occasion of their martyrdom was a second arrival of Egyptian brethren who suffered with them.

⁶ They had accompanied the confessors in Cilicia to the mines there and were returning to their homes. At the entrance of the gates of Cæsarea, the guards, who were men of barbarous character, questioned them as to who they were and whence they came. They kept back nothing of the truth, and were seized as malefactors taken in the very act. They were five in number.

⁷ When brought before the tyrant, being very bold in his presence, they were immediately thrown into prison. On the next day, which was the nineteenth of the month Peritius, according to the Roman reckoning the fourteenth before the Kalends of March, they were brought, according to command, before the judge, with Pamphilus and his associates whom we have mentioned. First, by all kinds of torture, through the invention of strange and various machines, he tested the invincible constancy of the Egyptians.

⁸ Having practiced these cruelties upon the leader of all, he asked him first who he was. He heard in reply the name of some prophet instead of his proper name. For it was their custom, in place of the names of idols given them by their fathers, if they had such, to take other names; so that you would hear them calling themselves Elijah or Jeremiah or Isaiah or Samuel or Daniel, thus showing themselves inwardly true Jews, and the genuine Israel of God, not only in deeds, but in the names which they bore. When Firmilianus had heard some such name from the martyr, and did not understand the force of the word, he asked next the name of his country.

⁹ But he gave a second answer similar to the former, saying that Jerusalem was his country, meaning that of which Paul says, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother," and, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."⁷

¹⁰ This was what he meant; but the judge thinking only of the earth, sought diligently to discover what that city was, and in what part of the world it was situated. And therefore he applied tortures that the truth might be acknowledged. But the man, with his hands

twisted behind his back, and his feet crushed by strange machines, asserted firmly that he had spoken the truth.

¹¹ And being questioned again repeatedly what and where the city was of which he spoke, he said that it was the country of the pious alone, for no others should have a place in it, and that it lay toward the far East and the rising sun.

¹² He philosophized about these things according to his own understanding, and was in nowise turned from them by the tortures with which he was afflicted on every side. And as if he were without flesh or body he seemed insensible of his sufferings. But the judge being perplexed, was impatient, thinking that the Christians were about to establish a city somewhere, inimical and hostile to the Romans. And he inquired much about this, and investigated where that country toward the East was located.

¹³ But when he had for a long time lacerated the young man with scourgings, and punished him with all sorts of torments, he perceived that his persistence in what he had said could not be changed, and passed against him sentence of death. Such a scene was exhibited by what was done to this man. And having inflicted similar tortures on the others, he sent them away in the same manner.

¹⁴ Then being wearied and perceiving that he punished the men in vain, having satiated his desire, he proceeded against Pamphilus and his companions. And having learned that already under former tortures they had manifested an unchangeable zeal for the faith, he asked them if they would now obey. And receiving from every one of them only this one answer, as their last word of confession in martyrdom, he inflicted on them punishment similar to the others.

¹⁵ When this had been done, a young man, one of the household servants of Pamphilus, who had been educated in the noble life and instruction of such a man, learning the sentence passed upon his master, cried out from the midst of the crowd asking that their bodies might be buried.

¹⁶ Thereupon the judge, not a man, but a wild beast, or if anything more savage than a wild beast, giving no consideration to the young man's age, asked him only the same question. When he learned that he confessed himself a Christian, as if he had been wounded by a dart, swelling with rage, he ordered the tormentors to use their utmost power against him. ¹⁷ And when he saw that he refused to sacrifice as commanded, he ordered them to scrape him continually to his very bones and to the inmost recesses of his bowels, not as if he were human flesh but as if he were stones or wood or any lifeless thing. But after long persistence he saw that this was in vain, as the man was speechless and insensible and almost lifeless, his body being worn out by the tortures.

¹⁸ But being inflexibly merciless and inhuman, he ordered him to be committed straightway, as he was, to a slow fire. And before the death of his earthly master, though he had entered later on the conflict, he received release from the body, while those who had been zealous about the others were yet delaying.

¹⁹ One could then see Porphyry, like one who had come off victorious in every conflict, his body covered with dust, but his countenance cheerful, after such sufferings, with courageous and exulting mind, advancing to death. And as if truly filled with the Divine Spirit, covered only with his philosophic robe thrown about him as a cloak, soberly and intelligently he directed his friends as to what he wished, and beckoned to them, preserving still a cheerful countenance even at the stake. But when the fire was kindled at some distance around him in a circle, having inhaled the flame into his mouth, he continued most nobly in silence from that time till his death, after the single word which he uttered when the flame first touched him, and he cried out for the help of Jesus the Son of God. Such was the contest of Porphyry.

²⁰ His death was reported to Pamphilus by a messenger, Seleucus. He was one of the confessors from the army. As the bearer of such a message, he was forthwith deemed worthy of a similar lot. For as soon as he related the death of Porphyry, and had saluted one of the martyrs with a kiss, some of the soldiers seized him and led him to the governor. And he, as if he would hasten him on to be a companion of the former on the way to heaven, commanded that he be put to death immediately.

²¹ This man was from Cappadocia, and belonged to the select band of soldiers, and had obtained no small honor in those things which are esteemed among the Romans. For in stature and bodily strength, and size and vigor, he far excelled his fellow-soldiers, so that his appearance was matter of common talk, and his whole form was admired on account of its size and symmetrical proportions. ²² At the beginning of the persecution he was prominent in the conflicts of confession, through his patience under scourging. After he left the army he set himself to imitate zealously the religious ascetics, and as if he were their father and guardian he showed himself a bishop and patron of destitute orphans and defenseless widows and of those who were distressed with penury or sickness. It is likely that on this account he was deemed worthy of an extraordinary call to martyrdom by God, who rejoices in such things more than in the smoke and blood of sacrifices.

²³ He was the tenth athlete among those whom we have mentioned as meeting their end on one and the same day. On this day, as was fitting, the chief gate was opened, and a ready way of entrance into the kingdom of heaven was given to the martyr Pamphílus and to the others with him.

²⁴ In the footsteps of Seleucus came Theodulus, a grave and pious old man, who belonged to the governor's household, and had been honored by Firmilianus himself more than all the others in his house on account of his age, and because he was a father of the third generation, and also on account of the kindness and most faithful conscientiousness which he had manifested toward him. As he pursued the course of Seleucus when brought before his master, the latter was more angry at him than at those who had preceded him, and condemned him to endure the martyrdom of the Saviour on the cross.

²⁵ As there lacked yet one to fill up the number of the twelve martyrs of whom we have spoken, Julian came to complete it. He had just arrived from abroad, and had not yet entered the gate of the city, when having learned about the martyrs while still on the way, he rushed at once, just as he was, to see them. When he beheld the tabernacles of the saints prone on the ground, being filled with joy, he embraced and kissed them all.

²⁶ The ministers of slaughter straightway seized him as he was doing this and led him to Firmilianus. Acting as was his custom, he condemned him to a slow fire. Thereupon Julian, leaping and exulting, in a loud voice gave thanks to the Lord who had judged him worthy of such things, and was honored with the crown of martyrdom.

²⁷ He was a Cappadocian by birth, and in his manner of life he was most circumspect, faithful and sincere, zealous in all other respects, and animated by the Holy Spirit himself.

Such was the company which was thought worthy to enter into martyrdom with Pamphilus.

²⁸ By the command of the impious governor their sacred and truly holy bodies were kept as food for the wild beasts for four days and as many nights. But since, strange to say, through the providential care of God, nothing approached them,—neither beast of prey, nor bird, nor dog,—they were taken up uninjured, and after suitable preparation were buried in the customary manner.

²⁹ When the report of what had been done to these men was spread in all directions, Adrianus and Eubulus, having come from the so-called country of Manganaea to Cæsarea, to see the remaining confessors, were also asked at the gate the reason for their coming; and having acknowledged the truth, were brought to Firmilianus. But he, as was his custom, without delay inflicted many tortures in their sides, and condemned them to be devoured by wild beasts.

³⁰ After two days, on the fifth of the month Dystrus, the third before the Nones of March, which was regarded as the birthday of the tutelary divinity of Cæsarea,³ Adrianus was thrown to a lion, and afterwards slain with the sword. But Eubulus, two days later, on the Nones of March, that is, on the seventh of the month Dystrus, when the judge had earnestly entreated him to enjoy by sacrificing that which was considered freedom among them, preferring a glorious death for religion to transitory life, was made like the other an offering to wild beasts, and as the last of the martyrs in Cæsarea, sealed the list of athletes.

³¹ It is proper also to relate here, how in a short time the heavenly Providence came upon the impious rulers, together with the tyrants themselves. For that very Firmilianus, who had thus abused the martyrs of Christ, after suffering with the others the severest punishment, was put to death by the sword.

Such were the martyrdoms which took place at Cæsarea during the entire period of the persecution.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter II

⁶ There were with him many from Egypt, among whom was John, who surpassed all in our time in the excellence of his memory. He had formerly been deprived of his sight. Nevertheless, on account of his eminence in confession he had with the others suffered the destruction of his foot by cauterization. And although his sight had been destroyed he was subjected to the same burning with fire, the executioners aiming after everything that was merciless and pitiless and cruel and inhuman.

⁷ Since he was such a man, one would not be so much astonished at his habits and his philosophic life, nor would he seem so wonderful for them, as for the strength of his memory. For he had written whole books of the Divine Scriptures, "not in tables of stone" as the divine apostle says, neither on skins of animals, nor on paper which moths and time destroy, but truly "in fleshy tables of the heart," in a transparent soul and most pure eye of the mind, so that whenever he wished he could repeat, as if from a treasury of words, any portion of the Scripture, whether in the law, or the prophets, or the historical books, or the gospels, or the writings of the apostles.

⁸ I confess that I was astonished when I first saw the man as he was standing in the midst of a large congregation and repeating portions of the Divine Scripture. While I only heard his voice, I thought that, according to the custom in the meetings, he was reading. But when I came near and perceived what he was doing, and observed all the others standing around him with sound eyes while he was using only the eyes of his mind, and yet was speaking naturally like some prophet, and far excelling those who were sound in body, it was impossible for me not to glorify God and wonder. And I seemed to see in these deeds evident and strong confirmation of the fact that true manhood consists not in excellence of bodily appearance, but in the soul and understanding alone. For he, with his body mutilated, manifested the superior excellence of the power that was within him.

~Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, chapter 13

Origen (184 - 253AD)

I. ¹ Now when Severus also was stirring up persecution against the churches, in every place splendid martyrdoms of the champions of piety were accomplished, but with especial frequency at Alexandria. Thither, as to some great arena, were escorted from Egypt and the whole Thebais God's champions, who, through their most stedfast endurance in divers tortures and modes of death, were wreathed with the crowns laid up with God. Among these was Leonides, known as "the father of Origen," who was beheaded, leaving his son behind him quite young. It will not be out of place to describe briefly how deliberately the boy's mind was set on the Divine Word from that early age, especially as the story about him has received exceedingly widespread notoriety.

II. ¹ Many things, indeed, would there be to say, if one were to attempt at leisure to hand down in writing the man's life, and the narrative concerning him would require also a work of its own. Nevertheless, on the present occasion abridging most things as briefly as may be, we shall state some few of the facts concerning him, gathering what we set forth from certain letters and information derived from pupils of his, whose lives have been preserved even to our day.

² In the case of Origen I think that even the facts from his very cradle, so to speak, are worthy of mention. For Severus was in the tenth year of his reign, and Laetus was governor of Alexandria and the rest of Egypt, and Demetrius had just then received the episcopate of the communities there in succession to Julian. ³ When, therefore, the flame of persecution was kindled to a fierce blaze, and countless numbers were being wreathed with the crowns of martyrdom, Origen's soul was possessed with such a passion for martyrdom, while he was still quite a boy, that he was all eagerness to come to close quarters with danger, and to leap forward and rush into the conflict. ⁴ In fact, it were but a very little step and the end of his life was at hand, had not the divine and heavenly Providence, acting for the general good through his mother, stood in the way of his zeal. ' She, at all events, at first had recourse to verbal entreaties, bidding him spare a mother's feelings; then, when he learnt that his father had been captured and was kept in prison, and his whole being was set on the desire for martyrdom, perceiving that his purpose was more

resolute than ever, she hid all his clothes, and so laid upon him the necessity of remaining at home. ⁶ And since nothing else remained for him to do, and a zeal, intense beyond his years, suffered him not to be quiet, he sent to his father a letter on martyrdom most strongly urging him on, in which he advises him in these very words, saying: "Take care not to change thy mind on our account." Let this be recorded as the first proof of Origen's boyish readiness of mind and genuine love of godliness. 7 For indeed in the study of the faith also he had already laid down a good foundation, having been trained in the divine Scriptures from the time that he was still a boy. Certainly it was no ordinary amount of labour that he bestowed on these, since his father, in addition to the customary curriculum, took pains that these also should be for him no secondary matter. 8 On all occasions, for example, he kept urging him before beginning his secular lessons to train himself in the sacred studies, exacting from him each day learning by heart and repetition.

⁹ And this the boy did with no lack of willingness, nay, he worked with even excessive zeal at these studies,

so that he was not satisfied with reading the sacred words in a simple and literal manner, but sought something further,

and busied himself, even at that age, with deeper speculations, troubling his father by his questions as to what could be the inner meaning of the inspired Scripture.

¹⁰ And his father would rebuke him ostensibly to his face, counselling him to seek nothing beyond his years nor anything further than the manifest meaning; but secretly in himself he rejoiced greatly, and gave profound thanks to God, the Author of all good things, that He had deemed him worthy to be the father of such a boy. ¹¹ And it is said that many a time he would stand over the sleeping boy and uncover his breast, as if a divine spirit were enshrined therein, and kissing it with reverence count himself happy in his goodly offspring. These are the stories, and others akin to these, that they tell about Origen's boyhood.

¹² But when his father had been perfected by martyrdom, he was left destitute with his mother and six smaller brothers, when he was not quite seventeen. ¹³ His father's property was confiscated for the imperial treasury, and he found himself, along with his relatives, in want of the necessaries of life. ... ¹⁵ His father had brought him forward in secular studies, and after his death he applied himself wholly with renewed zeal to a literary training, so that he had a tolerable amount of proficiency in letters; and, not long after his father's perfecting, by dint of application to these studies, he was abundantly supplied, for a person of his years, with the necessaries of life.

III. ¹ And while he was devoting himself to teaching, as he himself informs us somewhere in writing, since there was no one at Alexandria set apart for catechetical instruction (for all had been driven away by the threat of the persecution), some of the heathen approached him to hear the word of God. ² Of these Plutarch is pointed out as being the first, who after a noble life was adorned also with a divine martyrdom; and the second, Heraclas, Plutarch's brother. He also, in his own person, afforded a noteworthy example of a philosophic life and of discipline, and was deemed worthy of the bishopric of the Alexandrians in succession to Demetrius. ³ Origen was in his eighteenth year when he came to preside over the catechetical school, and at this time also he came into prominence when the persecutions were going on under Aquila, the governor of Alexandria.

Then also he won for himself an exceedingly wide reputation among all those who were of the faith, by the kindly help and goodwill that he displayed towards all the holy martyrs, unknown and known alike. ⁴ For he was present not only with the holy martyrs who were in prison, not only with those who were under examination right up to the final sentence, but also when they were being led away afterwards to their death, using great boldness and coming to close quarters with danger; so that, as he courageously drew near and with great boldness greeted the martyrs with a kiss, many a time the heathen multitude round about in its fury went near to stoning him, but for the fact that time after time he found the divine right hand to help him, and so escaped marvellously; ⁵ and this same divine and heavenly grace on other occasions again and again-it is impossible to say how often-preserved him safely, when plots were laid against him at that time because of his excessive zeal and boldness for the word of Christ.

And so great, then, was the war of unbelievers against him, that soldiers were placed in groups for his protection round the house where he abode, because of the number of those who were receiving instruction from him in the sacred faith. ⁶ Thus day by day the persecution against him blazed, so that there was no longer any place for him in the whole city; from house to house he passed, but was driven from all sides, on account of the numbers who through him came over to the divine teaching. For in his practical conduct were to be found to a truly marvellous degree the right actions of a most genuine philosophy ⁷ (for—as the saying goes—"as was his speech, so was the manner of life" that he displayed, and "as his manner of life, so his speech"), and it was especially for this reason that, with the co-operation of the divine power, he brought so very many to share his zeal.

⁸ And when he saw still more pupils coming to him (for the task of instruction had been entrusted by Demetrius, the president of the church, to him alone), considering that the teaching of letters was not consonant with training in the divine studies, without more ado he broke off the task of teaching letters, 9 as being unprofitable and opposed to sacred study; and then, for the good reason that he might never be in need of others' assistance, he disposed of all the volumes of ancient literature which formerly he so fondly cherished, content if he who purchased them brought him four obols a day. For a great number of years he continued to live like a philosopher in this wise, putting aside everything that might lead to youthful lusts; all day long his discipline was to perform labours of no light character, and the greater part of the night he devoted himself to studying the divine Scriptures; and he persevered, as far as possible, in the most philosophic manner of life, at one time disciplining himself by fasting, at another measuring out the time for sleep, which he was careful to take, never on a couch, but on the floor. 10 And above all he considered that those sayings of the Saviour in the Gospel ought to be kept which exhort us not to provide two coats nor to use shoes, nor, indeed, to be worn out with thoughts about the future. " Yea, he was possessed of a zeal beyond his years, and by persevering in cold and nakedness and going to the extremest limit of poverty, he greatly astounded his followers, causing grief to numbers who besought him to share their goods, when they saw the labour that he bestowed on teaching divine things. But he was not one to slacken endurance. ¹² He is said, for example, to have walked for many years without using a shoe of any description, yea more, to have refrained for a great many years from the use of wine and all except necessary

food, so that he actually incurred the risk of upsetting and injuring his stomach.

¹³ And by displaying proofs such as these of a philosophic life to those who saw him, he naturally stimulated a large number of his pupils to a like zeal, so that, even among the unbelieving Gentiles and those from the ranks of learning and philosophy, some persons of no small account were won by his instruction. By his agency these very persons received the faith of the divine Word truly in the depths of the soul, and were conspicuous at the persecution then taking place; insomuch that even some of them were arrested and perfected by martyrdom.

Origen's life and account of the martyrdom of his pupils

IV. 1 The first of these, then, was Plutarch, he whom we mentioned a little while ago. As this man was being led on the way to death, he of whom we have been speaking, being present with him to the very end of his life, was again almost killed by his fellowcitizens, as being clearly responsible for his death. ² But on that occasion also he was kept by the will of God. And, after Plutarch, Serenus was the second of Origen's pupils to show himself a martyr, having through fire given the proof of the faith he had received.³ From the same school Heraclides was the third martyr, and after him Hero, the fourth; the former of these was still a catechumen, the latter lately baptized. Both were beheaded. Further, in addition to these, from the same school was proclaimed a fifth champion of piety, one Serenus, a different person from the first-mentioned of that name. It is recorded that after very great endurance of torture his head was taken off. And, among the women, Herais, who was still under instruction for baptism, as Origen himself says somewhere, "received the baptism by fire," and so ended her life.

V. ¹ Seventh among them must be numbered Basilides, who led away the famous Potamiaena. The praise of this woman is to this day still loudly sung by her fellow-countrymen, as of one who on behalf of the chastity and virginity of her body, in which she excelled, ² contended much with lovers (for assuredly her body, as well as her mind, was in the full bloom of its youthful beauty); as of one who endured much, and at the end, after tortures that were terrible and fearful to relate, was perfected by fire, along with her mother Marcella. It is said, in fact, that the judge, whose name was Aquila, after inflicting severe tortures upon her entire body, at last threatened to hand her over to the gladiators for bodily insult, and that, when after a brief period of reflection she was asked what her decision was, she made a reply which involved from their point of view something profane.³ No sooner had she spoken than she received the sentence, and Basilides, being one of those serving in the army, took her and led her away to death. And as the crowd tried to annoy her, and insult her with shameful words, he kept restraining them and driving away the insulters, displaying the greatest pity and kindness towards her. She on her part accepted his fellow-feeling for her and bade him be of good cheer, ... ⁴ Thus speaking it is said, she right nobly endured the end, boiling pitch being poured slowly and little by little over different parts of her body from head to toe. 5 Such was the contest waged by this maiden celebrated in song. And not long afterwards, when Basilides was asked by his fellow-soldiers to swear for some reason or other, he stoutly affirmed that swearing was absolutely forbidden in his case, for that he was a Christian and acknowledged

it openly. At first, indeed, for a time they thought he was jesting, but when he continued stedfastly to affirm it, they brought him to the judge. ⁶ And when he admitted the constancy of his profession in his presence, he was committed to prison. ... Thereupon the brethren imparted to him the seal in the Lord, and on the day afterwards he

gave notable testimony for the Lord and was beheaded. VIII. ¹ At that time, while Origen was performing the work of instruction at Alexandría, he did a thing which gave abundant proof of an immature and youthful mind, yet withal of faith and selfcontrol. ² For he took the saying, "There are eunuchs which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," in too literal and extreme a sense, and thinking both to fulfil the Saviour's saying, and also that he might prevent all suspicion of shameful slander on the part of unbelievers (for, young as he was, he used to discourse on divine things with women as well as men), he hastened to put into effect the Saviour's saying, taking care to escape the notice of the greater number of his pupils. But, wishful though he might be, it was not possible to hide a deed of this nature. ³ In fact Demetrius got to know of it later, since he was presiding over the community at that place; and while he marvelled exceedingly at him for his rash act, he approved the zeal and the sincerity of his faith, bade him be of good cheer, and urged him to attach himself now all the more to the work of instruction.

⁴ Such indeed was his attitude at that time. But not long afterwards, when the same person saw that he was prospering and a great man and distinguished and famous in the sight of all, overcome by a human weakness, he attempted to describe the deed as monstrous to the bishops throughout the world, when the most highly approved and distinguished bishops in Palestine, namely those of Caesarea and Jerusalem, deeming Origen worthy of privilege and the highest honour, ordained him to the presbyterate by laying on of hands. ⁵ So, as he had then advanced to a position of great esteem, and had acquired no small reputation and fame for his virtue and wisdom in the eyes of all men everywhere, through lack of any other ground of accusation Demetrius spread grave scandal about the deed that he had committed long ago when a boy, and had the temerity to include in his accusations those who raised him to the presbyterate.

⁶ This happened a little while afterwards. At that time, however, Origen was engaged at Alexandria in the work of divine instruction for all, without reserve, who came to him by night and in the course of the day, devoting his whole time untiringly to the divine studies and his pupils.

XIV. ¹⁰ Now Adamantius (for this also was Origen's name), when Zephyrinus was at that time ruling the church of the Romans, himself states in writing somewhere that he stayed at Rome. His words are: "Desiring to see the most ancient church of the Romans."

¹¹ After spending a short time there, he returned to Alexandria, and indeed continued to fulfil in that city his customary work of instruction with all zeal, Demetrius, the bishop of the people there, still exhorting and wellnigh entreating him to ply diligently his task, of usefulness for the brethren.

XV. ¹ But when he saw that he was becoming unable for the deeper study of divine things, namely, the examination and translation of the sacred writings, and in addition for the instruction of those who were coming to him and did not give him time to breathe (for one batch of pupils after another kept frequenting from morn to night his lecture-room), he made a division of the numbers. Selecting Heraclas from among his pupils, a man who was zealous of divine things, and, as well, a very learned person and no tyro in philosophy,

A Tribute to Christian Martyrs

he gave him a share in the task of instruction, assigning to him the preliminary studies of those who were just learning their elements, and reserving for himself the teaching of the experienced pupils.

XVI. And so accurate was the examination that Origen brought to bear upon the divine books, that he even made a thorough study of the Hebrew tongue, and got into his own possession the original writings in the actual Hebrew characters, which were extant among the Jews. Thus, too, he traced the editions of the other translators of the sacred writings besides the Seventy; and besides the beaten track of translations, that of Aquíla and Symmachus and Theodotion, he discovered certain others, which were used in turn, which, after lying hidden for a long time, 2 he traced and brought to light, I know not from what recesses. With regard to these, on account of their obscurity (not knowing whose in the world they were) he merely indicated this: 3 that the one he found at Nicopolis, near Actium, and the other in such another place. At any rate, in the Hexapla of the Psalms, after the four well-known editions, he placed beside them not only a fifth but also a sixth and a seventh translation; ⁴ and in the case of one of these he has indicated again that it was found at Jericho in a jar in the time of Antoninus the son of Severus. All these he brought together, dividing them into clauses and placing them one over against the other, together with the actual Hebrew text; and so he has left us the copies of the Hexapla, as it is called. He made a further separate arrangement of the edition of Aquila and Symmachus and Theodotion together with that of the Seventy, in the Tetrapla.

XVIII. ¹ At this time also Ambrose, who held the views of the heresy of Valentinus, was refuted by the truth as presented by Origen, and, as if his mind were illuminated by light, gave his adhesion to the true doctrine as taught by the Church. ² And many other cultured persons, since Origen's fame was noised abroad everywhere, came to him to make trial of the man's sufficiency in the sacred books. And numbers of the heretics, and not a few of the most distinguished philosophers, gave earnest heed to him, and, one might almost say, were instructed by him in secular philosophy as well as in divine things. ³ For he used to introduce also to the study of philosophy as many as he saw were naturally gifted, imparting geometry and arithmetic and the other preliminary subjects, and then leading them on to the systems which are found among philosophers, giving a detailed account of their treatises, commenting upon and examining into each, so that the man was proclaimed as a great philosopher even among the Greeks themselves. ⁴ And many persons also of a more ignorant character he urged to take up the ordinary elementary studies, declaring that they would derive no small advantage from these when they came to examine and study the divine Scriptures. For this reason he deemed especially necessary even for himself a training in secular and philosophic studies.

XIX. ¹ Now, as witnesses also to his achievements in this direction, we have the Greek philosophers themselves who flourished in his day, in whose treatises we find frequent mention of the man. Sometimes they would dedicate their books to him, sometimes submit their own labours to him for judgement, as to a master. ... ¹⁰ For Origen kept safely the Christian teaching which he had from his parents. ¹¹ Let these things be stated to prove ... Origen's great knowledge of Greek learning.

XXI. ³ Origen's fame was now universal, so as to reach the ears of the Emperor's mother, Mamaea by name, a religious woman if ever there was one. She set great store on securing a sight of the man, and on testing that understanding of divine things which was the wonder of all. ⁴ She was then staying at Antioch, and summoned him to her presence with a military escort. And when he had stayed with her for some time, and shown her very many things that were for the glory of the Lord and the excellence of the divine teaching, he hastened back to his accustomed duties.

XXVI. ' Now it was in the tenth year of the above-mentioned reign that Origen removed from Alexandria to Caesarea, leaving to Heraclas the Catechetical School for those in the city. And not long afterwards Demetrius, the bishop of the church of the Alexandrians, died, having continued in the ministry for forty-three entire years. He was succeeded by Heraclas.

XXVIII. ¹ But to resume, Alexander the Emperor of the Romans, ... was succeeded by Maximin Caesar. He, through ill-will towards the house of Alexander, since it consisted for the most part of believers, raised a persecution, ordering the leaders of the Church alone to be put to death, as being responsible for the teaching of the Gospel. Then also Origen composed his work *On Martyrdom*. ... Origen has noted this particular time for the persecution, in the twenty-second of his *Expositions of the Gospel according to John*, and in various letters.

XXX. ¹ Now while Origen was plying his accustomed tasks at Caesarea, many came to him, not only of the natives, but also numbers of foreign pupils who had left their own countries. Among these as especially distinguished we know to have been Theodore, who was the selfsame person as that renowned bishop in our day, Gregory, and his brother Athenodore. Both of them were strongly enamoured of Greek and Roman studies, but Origen instilled into them a passion for philosophy and urged them to exchange their former love for the study of divine truth. Five whole years they continued with him, and made such progress in divine things that while still young both of them were deemed worthy of the episcopate in the churches of Pontus.

XXXIX. ⁵ Now the nature and extent of that which happened to Origen at the time of the persecution, and what was the end thereof; how the evil demon marshalled all his forces in rivalry against the man, how he led them with every device and power, and singled him out, above all others upon whom he made war at that time, for special attack; the nature and extent of that which he endured for the word of Christ, chains and tortures, punishments inflicted on his body, punishments as he lay in iron and in the recesses of his dungeon; and how, when for many days his feet were stretched four spaces in that instrument of torture, the stocks, he bore with a stout heart threats of fire and everything else that was inflicted by his enemies; and the kind of issue he had thereof, the judge eagerly striving with all his might on no account to put him to death; and what sort of sayings he left behind him after this, sayings full of help for those who needed uplifting-of all these matters the man's numerous letters contain both a true and accurate account.

~Eusebíus, Book 6

Origen, the celebrated presbyter and catechist of Alexandria, at the age of sixty-four, was seized, thrown into a loathsome prison, laden with fetters, his feet placed in the stocks, and his legs extended to the utmost for several successive days. He was threatened with fire, and tormented by every lingering means the most infernal imaginations could suggest. During this cruel temporizing, the emperor Decius died, and Gallus, who succeeded him, engaging in a war with the Goths, the Christians met with a respite. In this interim, Origen obtained his enlargement, and, retiring to Tyre, he there remained until his death, which happened when he was in the sixtyninth year of his age.

~Foxes Book of Martyrs, chapter 2, the seventh persecution, under Decius

hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley (died 1555)

A lighted fagot was now laid at Dr. Ridley's feet, which caused Mr. Latimer to say: "Be of good cheer, Ridley;



"Play the man. We shall this day, by God's grace, light up such a candle in England, as I trust, will never be put out."

When Dr. Ridley saw the fire flaming up towards him, he cried with a wonderful loud voice, "Lord, Lord, receive my spirit." Master Latimer, crying as vehemently on the other side, "O Father of heaven, receive my soul!" received the flame as it were embracing of it. After that he had stroked his face with his hands, and as it were, bathed them a little in the fire, he soon died (as it appeareth) with very little

~Foxe's Book of Martyrs

Notice Latimer says to Ridley the same words God said to Polycarp,

"Play the man".

| don't think it is any coincidence Latimer said this same encouraging word. He knew the scriptures, and | would bet he knew the story of Polycarp as well. Imagine knowing the history of Polycarp, and the miraculous event that took place at his stake, and now you have the same opportunity to show forth the glory of God! This shows the character of God shining thru Latimer in which he says, "we will light up such a candle". And indeed, he did.

James Pavanne (died 1525)

paín or none.

James Pavanne, a young scholar of Picardy, "a man of great sincerity," whom Briconnet had attracted to Meaux, showed great zeal for the Reformation

Mazurier (a former preacher of the reformation, who, at an earlier time, was arrested, but chose to recant and rejoin the papacy rather than endure the scaffold) soon found an opportunity of exercising his zeal. Young James Pavanne had also been cast into prison. Mazurier hoped that by causing his fall he might hide his own. The youth, James Pavanne, amiable manners, learning, and integrity of Pavanne excited a strong interest in his favour, and Mazurier imagined that he would himself be less guilty if he could drag Master James into similar guilt. He repaired to his dungeon, and began his manceuvres. He pretended to have gone farther than he in the knowledge of the truth. "You err, James," he often repeated to him, "you have not seen the bottom of the sea: you know only the surface of the waves and billows." Sophisms, promises, threats, nothing was spared.

The unhappy youth seduced, agitated, shaken, at last yielded to these perfidious attacks, and publicly recanted his pretended errors the day after Christmas 1524. But from that time a spirit of despondency and grief from the Almighty was upon Pavanne. His sighs were incessant. "Ah," repeated he, "nothing remains to me but a life of bitterness." Sad reward of faithlessness!

The poor youth, James Pavanne, since his abjuration at Christmas, 1524, had always been sighing and weeping. He was seen with a melancholy air, his eye fixed on the ground, inwardly groaning, and keenly reproaching himself for having denied his Saviour and his God.

Pavanne was no doubt one of the most modest and inoffensive of men. But no matter. He had been at Meaux at this time; no more was required. The cry was raised, "Pavanne has relapsed: The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." He was forthwith seized, cast into prison, and taken before the judges. This was the very thing that young Master James longed for. He felt comforted so soon as he was in irons, and recovered strength to make a full confession of Jesus Christ. The cruel smiled to see that this time nothing could deprive them of their victim: no recantation, no flight, no powerful protector. Neither the mildness of the young man, nor his candour and courage, nothing could soften his adversaries. He looked at them with love: for, in throwing him into chains, they had restored him his tranquillity and joy. But this tender look only hardened their heart the more. His accusation was quickly drawn up, and the Place de Grève soon saw a scaffold erected, on which Pavanne died joyfully, by his example strengthening all who in this great city openly or secretly believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

> ~D'Aubigné, J. H. M. (1862). History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century

<->·<->

In Conclusion

The above account of these faithful martyrs is but a small number compared to the thousands that have given their lives for the name of Jesus. All of us as Christians have an opportunity for martyrdom. Maybe not like those we have just mentioned, but all of us must lay down our life for Jesus. We must crucify the flesh, lay aside the old self, die to the flesh, and take up our cross daily. Let Jesus, who can be considered the most glorified martyr, be our true example.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, ... humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8).

When Jesus died on the cross, He gave us an example of how we should be living for Him. Jesus died so that we might have life in Him. Below is a list of the events of Jesus on the cross, which foreshadow the Christian life. I believe everything Jesus did on the earth, foreshadowed and symbolized a prophetic message. These five events on the cross, detailed below, portray how the Christian should be living this life.

- I- "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." (Luke 23:46). Jesus gave His life to the Father. He committed His spirit to the Father, knowing and trusting in the promise that He would be raised from the pit of hell, (Ps 16:10, Gal 3:19^b). We must have this same mindset; complete reliance on the Father. Giving Him our life as a living sacrifice, (Rom 12:1). Humbling ourself to Him, (IPet 5:6-7, Jam 4:10), and His will, even to the point of physical death because even in death, there is life everlasting, a better and a lasting possession, (Heb 10:34-39).
- II- "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (Matthew 27:51). Jesus' death tore down the barrier between God and man. Now, because of Jesus, our High Priest and mediator, we can boldly come to the throne of Grace, (Heb 4:16).

A Tribute to Christian Martyrs

2 Corinthians 3:16- whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

- III- "and the earth shook and the rocks were split." (Matthew 27:51). When we commit our life to Jesus and love not our life even unto death, the power of God moves in our lives. Doors are opened, paths are made clear, and anything that exalts itself against the name of Jesus is torn down, (2Cor 10:5, Prov 3:5-10, Heb 12:13, Is 45:1^b-2).
- IV- "The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;" (Matthew 27:52). The light we shine for the world to see brings life to all who hear the good news. Those who were dead in sin will now live in Christ because of the life-giving Word of God shown forth in our lives, (Eph 1:13-14, 2:5).
- V- "Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54). When the world sees the miraculous hand of God at work in your life, they will see the glory of God, and realize the Truth, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ, (Matt 9:8, 5:16, IPet 2:12).

"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10).

The Greek word for martyr is $\mu \dot{\alpha} \rho \tau \upsilon \varsigma$, martys, which means witness, but the English word, martyr, has taken on a different meaning through its use in Christianity. Instead of meaning witness, it has been commonly known as someone who willingly suffers death for Christ. This is because, to identify with Christ, or to be a witness for Jesus, usually, up until the last few hundred years in America, resulted in death. We, as Christians, must consider ourselves witnesses for Christ. It is our duty, as "martyrs" to proclaim the name of Jesus and show forth the praises of His glory. We may not all have the occasion of dying a martyr's physical death, but we can live a martyr's life. We must crucify our flesh, die to sin, and lay aside our old self. We can commit our life to Jesus as a living sacrifice. We need not shrink back because of persecution, instead we must have a desire to proclaim Jesus, even when faced with physical death as a result. We as Christians cannot live a safe life, avoiding persecution and tribulation. We must let our light shine before men, and either they will see our good works and give glory to the Father, or they will insult you, and persecute you, and falsely say all manner of evil against you because of Jesus.

But rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in "beaven!



A Guideline to Sanctification

~176~



n the subsequent pages, we will conclude this topic of sanctification by taking an in-depth look, and systematically study each of these seven steps below. This is the walk of a born-again believer; a way of life Christians must strive for

continually. This is pleasing to the Father, and will result in a life with fullness of joy and unending happiness, a satisfaction in Him that nothing else can compare.

- I- Connect yourself to the Vine
- II- Put on the new self
- III-Walk by the Spirit and humble yourself to God
- IV- Walk in love, regard others as more important than yourself
- V- Derive the benefit of the Spirit
- VI- Bear the fruit of the Spirit to build and equip others in the body of Christ
- VII- Resulting in the sanctification of the soul

Step 1- Connect yourself to the Vine

The first step to anything involving the things of God is being connected to Jesus. Jesus is the source to eternal life. He is the only One who can give unending happiness and eternal joy, (Jn 15:11, Ps 16:11). He is the mediator between God and man, (1Tim 2:5). God made a covenant of promise to Abraham announcing through his descendant (singular), namely Jesus, all nations would be blessed, (Gal 3:16, 19, Gen 22:17-18). The promise that the Messiah was to be born and come into this world was given to Abraham, but the promise of eternal life in Christ

A Guideline to Sanctification

was made to the Seed, Jesus, and Jesus only. The promise to Abraham announcing the coming of the Messiah through his lineage was sealed by God's Word and the blood of an animal, (Gen 15:5, 9-10, 17). The covenant of eternal life in Christ was sealed by two immutable things, His Word and the blood of Jesus, (Heb 6:17-18). This covenant of eternal life between the Father and Jesus is unbreakable and eternal, (Rom 6:9), and through the grace of God, we are made heirs of God, inheriting the promise of eternal life through our Savior Jesus. For it is through the administration of the promise from our High Priest that we can obtain eternal life, (Gal 3:29, Heb 9:15, Ezek 46:16, 44:28).

Therefore, the only way to participate in the covenant of eternal life is to connect yourself to Jesus, who is the Vine. We do this by having faith in Jesus; confess He is Lord and believe in your heart He died and was raised from the dead, then, you will be saved from eternal damnation, (Rom 10:9-10). You are now grafted into the family of God. "and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree." (Romans II:17). By this, you now have become a child of the promise of life in Christ Jesus, (Gal 3:7, Rom 9:6-8).

Step 2- Put on the new self

Now, being connected to Jesus, we must pursue the righteous things of God. We have discussed this previously in the book, but in summary we must:

<->.<->

- Make Jesus your treasure
- Press on toward the prize of the high calling
- Lay aside the old self, consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God

A Guideline to Sanctification

- Run the race that is set before us
- Put on the new self that has been freely given to us and conform our physical body and soul to align with our new, reconciled spirit

Ephesians 4:22-24-²² <u>throw off your old sinful nature</u> and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, <u>let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes</u>, ²⁴ that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and <u>put on</u> <u>the new self</u>, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Colossians 3:10- <u>put on the new self</u> who is being <u>renewed to</u> <u>a true knowledge</u> according to the image of the One who created him.

Our spirit has been clothed in His righteousness, (Rev 3:5, 7:9, 19:14) but our soul must be renewed and transformed into the image of our new spirit. The Greek word, $\dot{\epsilon}v\delta\dot{v}\omega$, endyo- "to put on" is a verb denoting action in the middle grammatical voice. Meaning, it signifies that the subject of the verb is being affected by its own action or is acting upon itself. Anytime this verb, "endyo" is used in the middle grammatical voice, it indicates we must be doing the "putting on", not somebody else. God has clothed our spirit with His righteousness, covered by the blood of Jesus, this is the free-gift of grace, but it is our responsibility to transform our soul into the image of the spirit through the efficacious work of grace by the Holy Spirit co-operating within us. ² Peter 13</sup> "seeing that His

divine power has <u>granted to us everything pertaining to life</u> <u>and godliness</u>, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence," ^{2 Peter 1:4} "so that by them <u>you may become partakers of the divine nature</u>, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Jesus gave us everything we need for life and godliness in Him, "My grace is sufficient for you." (2 Corinthians 12:9). But it is our duty to make the decision to accept His grace and "put on" the things pertaining to life and godliness, in which grace has freely given to us; that we "may become" partakers of the divine nature. It is not an automatic transformation from the point in which your spirit is made righteous and your soul has taken on the divine nature. We must choose to denounce and lay aside the sinful nature and put on the divine nature through our pursuit of Jesus.

Below are several scriptures describing what we should ἐνδύω, endyo, "put on":

Romans 13:12- Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and <u>**put on the armor of light**</u>.

Romans 13:14- But <u>**put on the Lord Jesus Christ**</u>, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

Ephesians 4:24- and <u>**put on the new self**</u>, which in *the likeness* of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Ephesians 6:11- <u>Put on the full armor of God</u>, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Colossians 3:10- <u>put on the new self</u> who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

Colossians 3:12- put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

I Thessalonians 5:8- let us be sober, having <u>put on the</u> <u>breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation</u>.

Another Greek verb, with a similar meaning as endyo, is the lemma, $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\alpha\lambda\lambda\omega$, periballo- "to clothe, wear a garment, put on." | find this word very interesting, especially in the relationship of the text. It is used a couple of different ways: when used in the passive grammatical voice, it is explaining justification, the other, when used in the middle grammatical voice, implies sanctification. It is the grammatical voice of the verb which distinguishes the difference. Let's start with the verses explaining justification:

Revelation 4:4- Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, <u>clothed</u>, $(\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\epsilon\beta\lambda\eta\mu\epsilon\nuou\varsigma$, peribeblemenous) in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

Peribeblemenous is a verb in the perfect tense, meaning, a verb tense used by the writer to describe a completed verbal action that occurred in the past, and is still continuing in the present state, resulting from the past results. The word clothed is referring to being clothed in the righteousness of God. It is a robe of righteousness given to these people as a free-gift from God, and they are still experiencing the righteousness of God in their present state. | believe the twenty-four elders represent the body of Christ that was caught away in the rapture. This verb is also in the passive grammatical voice meaning, the subject is being acted upon. He is the receiver of the verbal action from God, not himself. This is different than the middle grammatical voice which signifies the subject acting on himself. This grammatical voice is what differentiates between justification and sanctification. When it is referring to justification, the passive voice is used, meaning God is acting upon us, which is different than the middle grammatical voice, implying that the subject is performing the action on itself rather than being acted upon. Because we do not earn our righteousness, it is a free-gift from God through His grace by faith, the passive grammatical voice is used when justification is the result. This is the case in Revelation 4:4, which we read above, and the verse below, Rev 7:9-14, is another example of the passive grammatical voice, pertaining to justification, signifying the subject, the multitudes of people

standing in front of the throne, are being acted upon by God, being clothed with God's righteousness.

Revelation 7:9–14-9 behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, <u>clothed</u>, ($\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\epsilon\beta\lambda\eta\mu\epsilon\nuo\nu\varsigma$, peribeblemenous) in white robes, ... These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and <u>made them white in the blood of the Lamb</u>.

Below is the same lemma word, $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\dot{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$, periballo- "to clothe, wear a garment, put on", but this time using the middle grammatical voice, implying that the subject is performing the action on itself rather than being acted on. This is the same verb usage we looked at above. It implies responsibility. It gives us the sense that we must be putting something on ourselves rather than someone else clothing us.

Revelation 3:5- 'He who overcomes will thus be <u>clothed</u> ($\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\alpha\lambda\epsilon\tilde{\imath}\tau\alpha\iota$, peribaleitai) in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 3:18- I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that **you may clothe yourself**, ($\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta d\lambda\eta$, peribalē), and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Revelation 19:8- It was given to her to <u>clothe herself</u>, $(\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\dot{\alpha}\lambda\eta\tau\alpha\iota, \text{peribal}\bar{e}tai)$, in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Jesus is making it clear, there is a choice to victory. Consider Revelation 3:4- 'But you have a few people in Sardis <u>who have not soiled</u> <u>their garments</u>; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. This is the leading verse for the first example we just read, Revelation 3:5- "He who overcomes will thus be <u>clothed</u> ($\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\beta\alpha\lambda\epsiloni\tau\alpha\iota$, peribaleitai) in white garments." There are those

who soil or defile their garments with the cares of this world, and are asleep to the things of God; Jesus will come as a thief to those people. But there are those who have not soiled their garments. They have overcome, and have put on the white robe, the righteous acts of the saints. These are they who have decided to lay aside the old self, and put on Jesus. They have separated themselves from the world, not to be made righteous, but in pursuit of the process for sanctification.

While Jesus was on the earth, He tells the parable of a wedding feast a king gave for his son. The king invited all to come, both evil and good, many rejected his invitation, but the wedding hall was still filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was <u>not dressed in wedding clothes</u>, (He didn't put on the wedding garment), and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "<u>For many</u> <u>are called, but few are chosen</u>." (Matthew 22:11-14).

I want to be chosen. I want to hear the words, "well done, good and faithful servant." This can only happen if we make the choice to "put on" Jesus. The parable of the wedding feast is a topic we will spend our time discussing in the third volume on glorification, but I would mention one thing. The wedding feast is not eternal life with Jesus. It is a celebration of the wedding concerning the status we will have in eternal life. The guests at the wedding feast, and the "bride of Christ" herself, are two separate groups of Christians who have overcome the persecutions of the world and chosen Jesus as their treasure. They were chosen to participate in a ceremony only prepared for those who were faithful and have made themselves ready. This is the reward for their faithfulness and the ultimate prize of the high calling.

≺•>•<•>

Step 3- Walk by the Spirit and humble yourself to God

To walk by the Spirit is to allow the Spirit to be the defining course of your life. It is to give access to the Spirit of God to guide you in the process of attaining to the plan of God. The Spirit of God will never speak of Himself, He will only speak of Jesus. He will never force Himself on your life. He is our Comforter, our Helper, our Guide into the Truth of Jesus, (Jn 16:13-14). We must submit and humble ourselves to God before the Spirit will be our Counselor. We humble ourselves by making Jesus our priority, making His will the most important thing in our life. "Father, not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33).

By taking an exegetical, in-depth look at Galatians 5:16- But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. This gives us a better sense of what it means to "walk by the Spirit". The KJV translates this "walk in the Spirit". The NASB translates it "by" the Spirit. The Greek lemma word for "by the Spirit" is $\pi v \epsilon \tilde{v} \mu \alpha$, pneuma, meaning spirit. The fascinating thing about the Greek language is the English translation needs to add two more words to convey the meaning of this text, when the Greek can merely change the case of the word and now it gives this noun more meaning. For instance, the phrase, "by the Spirit", is one Greek word, πνεύματι, pneumati, notice the Greek added a "ti" at the end of the lemma pneuma. Now this definition is more than just spirit. The Greek word pneumati, has the dative case and uses the dative of means. The dative case is defined as referring to the person or thing to which something is given or for whom something is done⁴. The dative of means uses the dative to express the means of an action. The noun is not viewed as the

⁴ Heiser, M. S., & Setterholm, V. M. (2013; 2013). Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology. Lexham Press.

expressing agency but course, not the tool but the process.⁵ So in the case of our text, the translation, "by the Spirit", is more accurate than, "in the Spirit". Now let us apply this to our life. If the noun, the Spirit, is not the expressing agency, but instead it is the course by which the process is accomplished, this puts the responsibility back on us, who the verse is originally intended for. It is not saying the Spirit will walk the path of life for us, but rather, we must walk the path of life by the Spirit's direction and guidance. We must choose to accept and allow the Spirit's influence in our life, but it is our decision to accept His guidance. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105). This is directly related to step 2, "put on the new self". The Spirit will not force us to walk by His direction. Instead, we must choose to accept His help and walk by the Spirit's influence and guidance.

Make Jesus your one and only treasure, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21).

Abide in the love of God, knowing He sent His only Son to die for you, (Jn 3:16). Abide in Jesus and let His Word abide in you, (Jn 15:5-9).

"Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (I Peter 5:6-7). Give Him your life and let Him take care of you. "<u>Come to Me</u>, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <u>Take</u> <u>My yoke upon you</u> and <u>learn from Me</u>, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30).

It is only by giving ourselves to Him first, that the flesh can be controlled. The flesh, in its natural state, is ruled by the sinful nature. We must submit ourselves to God, humble ourselves to Him, **Romans 8:4-8** "do not follow the sinful nature but instead <u>follow the Spirit</u>. Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about

⁵ Lukaszewski, A. L. (2007). The Lexham Syntactic Greek New Testament Glossary. Lexham Press.

sinful things, but those who are <u>controlled by the Holy Spirit</u> <u>think about things that please the Spirit</u>. So, letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But <u>letting the</u> <u>Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace</u>. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God." The only way to be loosed from the sinful nature is to humble yourself to God and walk by the Spirit. You cannot stop obeying the sinful nature unless you first decide to submit your life to God and His plan. This is dying to the flesh, considering yourself dead to sin and alive to God, (Rom 6:II).

Galatians 5:24 "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have <u>crucified the flesh</u> with its passions and desires." Romans 6:6-8 "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now <u>if we have died with Christ</u>, we believe that <u>we shall also live with Him</u>," ^{Colossians 3:5} "So, put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you." Romans 8:13 "For if you live by the dictates of the flesh, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live."

Keep your focus on Jesus. Do not allow yourself to be tossed about by the sinful nature of yourself or others. ^{Ephesians 4:14-15} "We are <u>no</u> <u>longer to be children, tossed here and there</u> by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but <u>speaking the</u> <u>truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him</u> who is the head, even Christ," James 1:6-8 "<u>Do not waver</u>, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, <u>they are double-minded</u> <u>and unstable in everything they do</u>." ^{Hebrews 13:9} "<u>Do not be</u> <u>carried away</u> by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace..."

~186~

Step 4- Walk in Love, regard others as more important than yourself

Walking in love is the only way to give up selfish ambition. Love is defined as charity in the KJV because the Greek word $\dot{\alpha}\gamma\dot{\alpha}\pi\eta\nu$, agape is a giving love. The opposite of agape is not hate, but selfishness. Therefore, love will conquer selfish ambition; including pride and the lusts of the flesh. Love is the only way to sanctify the soul, for out of love bears the fruit of the Spirit which results in sanctification. "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life." (Romans 6:22).

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but <u>through</u> <u>love serve one another</u>." (Galatians 5:13).

Our responsibility as Christians is to use our freedom in Christ to love and serve one another. Treat others as more important than yourself. Let the love of God show through in your life, and cut off the works and ambition of the flesh. ^{Philippians 2:3} "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind <u>regard one another</u> <u>as more important than yourselves</u>;" ^{1 Peter 1:22} "Since you have in obedience to the truth <u>purified your souls for a sincere love</u> of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart," ^{1 John 3:16} "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." ^{John} ^{15:13} "<u>Greater love has no one than this</u>, that one lay down his life for his friends."

We must look to Jesus as our example when He humbled Himself to the will of the Father and became obedient to death. And it was through this death He showed His great love toward us, freeing us from the bondage of sin and reconciling us by His grace into the kingdom of His dear Son, (Philippians 2:5). If we want to lead people to Christ, then we must serve one another. The best leaders are the ones who lead by example. We must serve one another and lead by love. And it is through

this love which, "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5), that we can love one another.

By walking in love, it removes selfish ambition. It allows the Spirit of God to freely move in our lives, we derive the benefit of the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit for others, resulting in the sanctification of our soul.

Step 5- Derive the benefit of the Spirit

Romans 6:22- But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you <u>derive your benefit</u>, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

To "derive your benefit" is a translation from the Greek words, $\check{\epsilon}\chi\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon$ $\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\delta\nu$, echete karpon. To derive means to have or possess. This is the first step to bearing the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will fill us up, to the full, to the point we start running over. John 10:10AMP "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance, to the full, till it overflows." Psalm 23:5 "You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings."

"I will save you that you may become a blessing." (Zechariah 8:13).

"I will bless you, ... so you shall be a blessing;" (Genesis 12:2).

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But <u>his delight is in the law of the LORD</u>, And in His law he meditates day and night. <u>He will be like a tree</u> <u>firmly planted by streams of water</u>, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers." (Psalm 1:1-3).

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle." (Psalm 103:2-5).

God has blessed us to be a blessing and to serve others. This is the goal and the plan of life on this earth. To be ambassadors for Christ, adding to, and building up the body of Christ. As we live and abide in Him and His Word, we connect ourselves to the Vine, deriving the benefit of the Vine. Profiting in the fatness, the rich root of the olive tree, (Rom II:17). This fatness of the root makes the branch healthy and alive, able to bear fruit on the branches. The branch doesn't benefit from the fruit it bears. The fruit is for others to pick off and eat. There is no need for the Christian to eat his own fruit. We have something so much better. We are connected to the Vine and have an endless supply of the rich fatness of the Root. By this, we derive the goodness of God, being completely satisfied in Him, leading to the process of bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Step 6- Bear the fruit of the Spirit to build and equip others in the body of Ghrist

Fruit bearing is a sign of the character and health of the branch. Jesus said, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. <u>You will know</u> <u>them by their fruits</u>. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So, <u>every good tree</u> <u>bears good fruit</u>, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. <u>A good tree</u>

<u>cannot produce bad fruit</u>, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit." (Matthew 7:15-18).

A fruit tree will only bear fruit when it is connected to the life-giving root. It doesn't need to work at bearing fruit. The fruit is merely a result of a healthy branch that has the sap or the rich fat of the root continually feeding it. The fruit it bears does not benefit the branch. The fruit is meant for others to eat from it. This is how we should be looking at our Christian life. The fruit we bear is not for us. We are not going to pick our own fruit and eat it. When you are connected to the rich fat of the Root, all your needs are met. You have no want and you are completely satisfied in Him. Then, because of the life we have flowing in us from the Vine, fruit is manifested. This fruit is for others to eat and be satisfied. The fruit is meant to build up and nourish others who aren't attached to the Vine. It is a type of the Light shining out from us, and God's love and goodness flowing through us, manifested outwardly to shine on others. "having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Philippians I:II). The fruit is not our goal, only an outward expression of the connection we have with Jesus. Jesus is our goal, our hope, and our only focus. When we make Jesus our only priority, the love of God flows through us, fulfilling every desire, every need. He produces a fulness of joy and unending happiness that nothing can compare. "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15:11).

"In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." (Psalm 16:11).

When we connect ourselves to Jesus and allow the love of God to flow through our lives, we are humbling ourselves to Him. Allowing Him to take care of us. We are walking by the Spirit, allowing Him to dictate the course of life. This is not burdensome to the Father. In fact, this is His desire. He wants to spend time with us. He loves when we put our lives in His hands, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (I Peter 5:6-7). The Father is the vinedresser. He helps us continue to bear fruit by taking care of His branches. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He lifts up; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:1-2). This gives the Father pleasure. He is pleased when we humble ourselves to Him and allow Him to take care of us. "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." (John 15:8). The Father, as the vinedresser, takes care of us by lifting us up and pruning the branches. This is accomplished through His Spirit-illuminated Word. His Word corrects, trains, and disciplines us. He strengthens and equips us to be a Light in this dark world. The process of discipline and training is the sanctification process, with the objective to bear fruit and increase the body of Christ. Let us read the first eleven verses of John 15, as a whole, to get an understanding of bearing fruit.

John 15:1-11-1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

~191~

" These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full."

Step 7- The Sanctification of the Soul

This final step is the result of all six previous steps. Sanctification is a life-long process continually flowing in these seven steps. We live in a fallen world, surrounded by sin and an enemy seeking to devour us. This world is filled with temptations and pit falls, constantly trying to distract, and lead us off the narrow path. Satan knows he can't steal our righteousness, so instead he tries to hinder our productivity. God has given us a Way to separate ourselves from the sin that does so easily beset us. Jesus is our answer, our refuge. If we abide in Him and allow His Word to abide in us, we will have a life completely satisfied in Him, full of everlasting joy and unending happiness. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, our Helper, our Comforter to continue His ministry on the earth. We must yield ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit by giving ourselves completely to Jesus, our High Priest. "Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2).

The sanctification process of the soul is a life-long battle between the sinful nature and the divine nature. It is an opportunity to show the worth of Jesus to the world. To let our light shine before men so they will see our good works and give glory to the Father. In Jesus, we have been freed from the bondage of sin, and made partakers of the perfect law of liberty; free to choose Jesus in every aspect of our life. This pleases the

Father, to freely choose Him apart from all the other things this world offers. He is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him. Satan is defeated, Jesus has the keys to death and hell, but just because the enemy has been defeated, man still must choose God. God will not force Himself on anyone. Although He greatly desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of Him, it is a free choice and He needs us, the body of Christ, ambassadors to the kingdom, to teach this good news to everyone. This world is a battle ground. The fight is not between God and Satan. Satan has already been defeated. The fight is for the decision of everlasting life. God needs us to proclaim His redemption to the world. Just because the enemy has been defeated and Jesus has overcome the world, doesn't mean that everyone instantly will accept Jesus. This is the purpose of the sanctification process. To allow His body to be separated from the sin of the world so we can function among the darkness, and rescue those who are lost without getting sucked back into the ways of the world. Think of our time on this earth as a rescue mission, a military operation to rescue those in bondage. Christians are not taken up to heaven the instant they are born-again because God needs us in this world to proclaim Jesus. To announce to the world the redemptive power of Jesus that can rescue those who would hear His Word and believe in Him. We are to fight the good fight. This doesn't mean we are fighting the battle of death and hell. Jesus already fought that fight and won. We are fighting against the sinful nature, the corruption of this fallen world.

We are on a rescue mission to liberate those who are still in the bondage of sin and teach them that there is a better hope in Jesus, full of joy and unending happiness.

The sanctification process of the soul is for Christians only. To participate in this process, you must be born-again. Your spirit must be made new and covered by the blood of Jesus through justification. The

sanctification of the soul separates the Christian from the sinful nature and the sins of the world, strengthening him to fight the good fight and proclaim the name of Jesus. Through the course of life, there will be tribulation and persecution. Men will ridicule you and say all manner of evil against you, but be comforted in the precious words of Jesus, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He is our hope and our future. With Him and in Him is fullness of joy and unending happiness for all eternity.

As we have discussed previously, there are three stages of salvation, justification of the spirit, sanctification of the soul, and the glorification of the body. The final completed state of the sanctified soul happens at the Bema Seat judgment. This is an event occurring just before the Marriage of the Lamb. It is a judgement for the righteous when our faithfulness is rewarded and worthless works are burned up, (2Cor 5:10, ICor 3:11-15, Rom 14:10-12, Dan 7:10). It is the distinguishing judgment of the prize of the upward calling, (Phil 3:14), an imperishable wreath, (ICor 9:24-25), a crown of righteousness for those who loved His appearing, (2Tim 4:8), and the treasure we have stored up in heaven, (Matt 6:19-21, 1Tim 6:19). It is a judgement in which Christians are judged by their faithfulness to Jesus while on the earth, and the condition of their heart toward God, (2Cor 5:10, Rev 22:12, 3:11, Dan 7:10, ICor 9:25, Matt 5:12, 20:8, 16:27, Jn 4:36, 2Jn 1:8, Lk 14:4).

This is an exciting time. The Bema Seat is the culmination of the sanctification process. Our goal as Christians should be to walk with Him in this newness of life on the earth, striving to be one with Him and separate from the world. But, while we are in this physical state, the sinful nature and the corruption of sin still resides in our bodies and in our soul. It is only through the fire of God that the old self can be completely destroyed and done away with. The Bema Seat judgment is this appointed time. This judgement is the prerequisite to the Marriage of the Lamb, the unification into the glory of God and life with Him forever. God will judge each man by fire, and the fire itself will burn off the sinful nature.

end unchanged. This is the result of a man who walked in sanctification on the earth and allowed the Holy Spirit to set him apart from sin and corruption, revealing the perfect inner man. The old self removed completely, exposing only the righteousness of God. This man, after the test of fire, is hardly changed and given rewards based on his faithfulness to Jesus on the earth. But there will be others who we will hardly recognize after being revealed by fire. These are those who never dedicated their life to Jesus. Their spirit was justified through grace by faith, but their faithfulness to Him on the earth was lacking. The fire of judgement burned off the sinful nature, finally exposing the righteousness of God in them which was hidden under the corruption of sin in their lives on the earth. They will come out transformed into a new person, completely unrecognizable because of their new state. These people will be saved, but everything else is burned away. They will spend eternity with Jesus, but the inheritance of rewards for their faithfulness will be wanting.

I want to be one of those Christians who, when tested by fire, is unchanged. I want to be like Polycarp, who, when the flames surrounded him, didn't consume him, but refined him like fire to gold, sparkling for all to see the majesty and worth of Jesus.

This is my desire; to be one with Him, starting now, refined by the fire of the Holy Spirit, crucified with Christ and raised up with Him together in heavenly places.



Conclusion

1951

The sanctification of the soul is a life-long dedication; a lifestyle of consistently choosing Jesus more than anything else; a separation from the sin and corruption inherent in every man. The sanctification process is our time to get to know Jesus. It is seeking Him in everything we do, in every aspect of our life, yearning for the hope we have in Christ.

Be strengthened by these words. Press on toward the goal, the prize of the high call of God. Increase in the Truth, Knowledge, and Wisdom of Him. Be fellow-workers with Him, performing and participating in His glorious plan of redemption, knowing we have a better and a lasting possession.

We have Jesus, our Savior

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ



Conclusion

RINCIPLES OF SANCTIFICA

set apart in Christ as fellow-workers with God GAY AD

-+- ---

-5-4

A book on the fundamental elements concerning our sanctification in Jesus.

What is sanctification and do we need it to spend eternity with Jesus?

How are we sanctified? Is it a result of our good works or is it through the works of the Holy Spirit?

In this second volume, of a three volume set, we explore the mechanics of salvation, continuing with the second step, the sanctification in Jesus. The process of being set apart in Christ, and becoming fellow-workers with God in His glorious plan of redemption.

> ISBN: 978-1-947266-01-8 Insight of the King Publications

> > insight of the king.com

by Zack Rosiere